

SUFISM AND MA'RIFA

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SUFISM AND MA'RIFA

Sufism, or *tasawwuf*, is an ocean without end. It is the knowledge of the Divine that encompasses the entire universe. Sufism is *ma'rifa*, the knowledge of Allah. This is something that exceeds description, however, everyone speaks of it according to their capacity of understanding and spiritual degree.

The Messenger of Allah, the Pride of the Universe, declares:

“O Lord! How can I praise You! You are as You praise Yourself.”

When compared with the knowledge of Allah, glory unto Him, the knowledge of God's Messenger is but a single drop of that ocean; the knowledge of the other great Prophets is a drop in the ocean when compared to the knowledge of God's Messenger, and the knowledge of the saints constitutes a drop in the ocean when compared to the knowledge of all the great Prophets. It follows, therefore, that Sufism is the knowledge of the Divine without end, boundary, or limit.



In this realm of endlessness, everyone acquires knowledge according to their lot. And as this knowledge acquired does not even amount to a single drop of the ocean, the servants of Allah can only behold and perceive Him, in the realm of Sufism, to the extent of the knowledge that He bestows them with.

Hence, the Sufis can only speak to the extent of the knowledge consigned to them. Notwithstanding the fact that the spiritual treasury of Allah, glory unto Him, is only ajar to some, His favour to certain special saints is much broader and deeper.

Given that *Wajib al-Wujud* (The Necessarily Existent One) has millions of servants, His manifestation to each of them is different. From this perspective, the knowledge and belief of millions of people are not equal; they seem the same, but are different.

This Divine knowledge, too, perpetually changes. We can become cognisant of knowledge which Allah, glorified be He, did not grant yesterday, and yet be nourished with further knowledge tomorrow.

In short, it is the knowledge of endlessness, the inner facet of which pens, microscopes, telescopes, and all the exoteric disciplines cannot fathom.



Archangel Michael aspired to travel the universe. He flew for ten years, but could not obtain any knowledge (in comparison to the speed of the angels, the speed of light is not even that of an ox-driven cart). He requested another ten years, which was granted him, but again he was unsuccessful and his wings caught fire. After this, He felt the need to prostrate before the majesty of Allah. **He fell down on his face in prostration, declaring, “Subhana Rabbiyal-A’la”** (“All-Glorified is my Lord, the Most High”).



There are some servants who understand their inability and weakness in this vast field of experiential knowledge of God. They shed tears before the grandeur of Al-Haqq. Some regard the Creator of this universe with wonder, some are left tongue-tied and speechless before the Divine Majesty, while others regain their power of speech, observe Allah, glory unto Him, and His blessings, favour, and benevolence and speak incessantly of them.

Mountains, peaks, and plains become narrow for some.

Some enter a small shanty and spend their lives therein.

Some are altogether enveloped by love, and want nothing of wealth, possessions,



offspring and worldly mansions; their only desire is Allah, the One.

The portion of even great saints is each distinct and varied. That granted to one is not granted to another, and one may not know that which another knows.

However, all those honoured with experiential knowledge ultimately know, understand and find Allah, the Most High. Knowing full well the purpose of their creation, they thereafter realise perfectly the duty of servant-hood falling upon them before the majesty of Allah, and do so with great ardour and love.

Advancement in the knowledge of *ma'rifa* is contingent upon the radiance and purity of the world of the heart.

Divine inspiration descends upon the world of the heart, in all its blessing and mercy, when four traits are present in the traveller on the path of truth. These are the following:

- Possession of a staunch sincerity.
- Being among the people of earnest steadfastness (*istiqama*).
- Diligence and perseverance.
- Complete submission.

The Sufis are blessed with such attributes of goodness as good character, benevo-

lence, grace and humility. Getting along well with everyone, they see ahead with insight and diligence, and their every manner and behaviour is that befitting the injunctions of the Qur'an as well as the morality, manner and actions of The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings.

They love Allah, may He be glorified, and His beloved more than their own lives, wealth, possessions and children.

If they had not been made to drink from the cup of love, they would not have been able to attain this sublime knowledge and station.



While the methods of the Sufis may appear different initially, they ultimately unite at the point of knowledge of Allah, the One of Majesty and One of Perfection.

However, while the philosophers are on the same path to begin with, they cannot reach agreement because their egos are ultimately astir. These persons cannot justly find Allah, glory unto Him; they thus end up being enemies of one another and cursing each other. They put forward many baseless claims and theories and are thwarted in their expectations.

Islam and philosophy do not mix. **Such friends of Allah as Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and Imam Ghazali** cannot be called



Muslim philosophers. They are known as Sufis.

Sufism is complete obedience to the injunctions of the Qur'an and to the elevated Sunna of God's Messenger. If the Qur'anic commandments, or the *Shari'a* is the shell, or the outer layer, then *tariqa* is its kernel. However, a kernel without its shell is inconceivable. When the shell is united with the essence, this is the path of those seeking perfection.

As those masters with a heightened spirituality drink from that offered to them, they advance, their sobriety overcomes their intoxication, and their humility increases more and more. They become annihilated, and their sole desire is to become one with the One. Their every desire other than attaining the approval and pleasure of Allah has been reduced to nonexistence and they have even forgotten themselves.



One day, a person came and looked around him.

Bayazid asked:

“Who do you seek?”

“I seek Bayazid,” he replied. Bayazid said:

“Even I have been seeking Bayazid for the past thirty years, but cannot find him.”



The narratives of Bayazid, may Allah sanctify his secret, contain indication of this.

They asked Junayd, may Allah sanctify his secret:

“When is the heart agreeable?”

He replied:

“When He is present therein.” That is, when God is present.

Sainthood (*walaya*) does not have a garb; the inside of the heart is another realm. Only those servants on whose eyes Allah, glory unto Him, has applied the patina of spiritual knowledge, can diagnose these.

Sayings of the Sultans of Hearts

Mahmud Sami, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“The origin of Sufism and its rules and methods are all based on the shari'a.

Sufism is *profound love of Allah* and abandoning all pretension.

Sufism is *the chemistry of the effusion of the elixir of truth*.

Sufism is *constant remembrance and invocation and departing from everything other than Allah*. (Fleeing all other than Him.)



Sufism is the *radiant sun, full moon, light of wisdom, attraction to a sinless life, the station of amazement and perfected vision.*

Abu Sulayman Darani, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

Sufism is a set of actions prevailing upon the Sufi of which none have knowledge save Allah, and it is their being with Allah in a way only He knows.

Abu Bakr Kattani, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

Sufism is comprised entirely of morality and good character; one who is superior morally, is superior spiritually.

Sufism is purity (of heart) and observation (of the Divine Beauty).

According to Abu Bakr Saydalani, may Allah sanctify his secret:

Sufism is suffering; when spiritual perfection is attained, there is no suffering.

'Abd Allah al-Tustari, may Allah sanctify his secret affirms:

Sufism is eating little, finding rest in Allah, glorified be He, and fleeing the company of people.

Junayd al-Baghdadi, may Allah sanctify his secret states:

No other path save following in the footsteps of the Prophet can take a person to Allah.

For Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, may Allah sanctify his secret:

The sign of a lover's loving Allah, is their following His Messenger, the beloved of Allah, in his actions, morality, command and Sunna.

Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

All inner knowledge attained through intuition which deviates from outward injunctions is falsehood.

In the words of Abu Sa'id al-Arabi, may Allah sanctify his secret:

Sufism is faithfulness, or carrying out everything good occurring to our hearts for the sake of Allah.

The entirety of Sufism is abandoning the futile; the entirety of *ma'rifa* is realising one's ignorance.

Abu al-Hasan Kawshanj(?), may Allah sanctify his secret:

Sufism is a name which has no reality in our time. When Sufism has reality, it is no longer a name.

For Abu 'Abd Allah Khafif, may Allah sanctify his secret:



“[Sufism is] finding Allah in a moment of heedlessness.”

Abu ‘Amr Dimishq, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

Sufism is seeing the universe as wanting throughout, and is shutting one’s eyes to all its deficiencies for the observation of the One who is above any imperfection.

Muhammad Tirmidhi, may Allah sanctify his secret:

Sufism is all about the heart, the time and being alive. One who loses their heart, their time and their liveliness is not a Sufi.

Abu Ja’far Ahmad (Hamdanoğlu), may Allah sanctify his secret:

The sign of those truly devoted to the Truth is that they accept no task which directs them in any other direction.

They inquired of Abu'l Hassan Dīnawari, may Allah sanctify his secret:

“What is a *murid* and what are their attributes?”

He recited to his inquirers the following Qur’anic verse:

“The earth was too narrow for them despite all its vastness, and their souls became utterly constricted for them, and they came to perceive fully that there is

no refuge from God except in Him.” (Taubah, 9:118)

Abu Bakr (Şadanoğlu), may Allah sanctify his secret:

Looking for the welfare of the body and Sufism cannot come together.

Bundar Shirazi, may Allah sanctify his secret, has referred to Sufism as keeping one's word.

The advice Ismail Ata -may Allah sanctify his secret- gives to those on the Sufi path:

“O Sufi, with you we have become brothers in *tariqa*. Accept this word of advice from me. Take this world as a veil of imagination, see as nonexistent everything save you and Allah, be so engaged with remembrance (*dhikr*) that Unity prevails and you give up the claim to exist selfishly so that only Allah remains.”

Anonymous:

[Sufism is] a person's exhausting their entire existence in the path of Allah and their finding life with Him.

Anonymous:

[Sufism is] constant observation of Allah Almighty's majesty and knowing and perceiving one's own weakness and wretchedness. [It is] loving all creation in accordance with their degrees, being of service to them



and pleasing them.

Anonymous:

[Sufism is] sincerity, humility, hunger and becoming overwhelmed with Divine inspiration in repose and tranquillity.

Shaykh Abu Sa'id Abu 'l-Khayr, may Allah sanctify his secret: "To date, seven hundred individuals from among the saints have uttered various statements concerning the history of Sufism. The essence of all these statements converge at this point: Sufism is utilising time for that which is most valuable.

The value of a human being is proportionate to the extent of their perception of the truths of the towering figures of this path.

The objective of the knowledge of Sufism is turning to Allah, glory unto Him, at every instant without effort or exertion. That is, it is perpetual remembrance of Allah, glory unto Him.

Sayr suluk in Sufism

The realm of *ma'rifa* (Sufism) is very distinct. Some, at the mention of the realm of *ma'rifa*, see it to be as a village. Some see it to be as big as a small town. Others aggrandise it as a great country. Others still, imagine the world and the Hereafter and

magnify the realm of *ma'rifa* to such a degree. However, the essence of the matter is none of these. Only those who have a share in and a taste of it can know...

Some people have disparaged this spiritual path either because they do not know what Sufism or *sayr suluk* is, or because they do not have a share of it.

These spiritual paths are not, as considered by some, to be a haphazard path of innovation, subsequently invented and formed.

Sufism is a path of union with Allah, glory unto Him, whose roots rest in **Abu Bakr the Siddiq and 'Ali al-Murtada, may Allah be well pleased with them both.**

It is the path of the Gnostics (*Gnostics*) and the saints who have serious and high character. In short, it is the way of the earnest lovers who Allah, glorified be He, has drawn to Himself. It is the way of the people of the heart, honest, pure and free of every vice. It is the path of those who love Allah and those whom He loves. It is the path of those whose carnal souls have departed and who subsist in Allah. It is the path of the tearful, with an all-embracing comfort.

Even Shaykhul-Islam Çivizâde, as a result of his erroneous view (possessing only the physical eye), cursed Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi – may Allah sanctify his secret – and



was subsequently discharged from office for this impudence by Sulayman the Magnificent.



Requisite of the Spiritual Path

In aspirants of the spiritual path is sought, first and foremost,

Honesty;

Humility;

A heart that is profound;

Mildness;

Friendliness;

Sincerity; and

Upright-ness (*istiqama*).

Following these come endeavour, earnestness and sacrifice.

In sum, those aspiring for knowledge of the Divine, or *ma'rifa*, can only acquire the contentment of heart that they seek through the way of Sufism. Purity of intention and endeavour being for the sake of Allah is necessary for one to benefit.

It is only through the path of *sayr suluk* that a human being can attain perfection to the degree of their sincerity and endeavour and can thus duly fulfil the Qur'anic com-



mandments. As their carnal self has died, they have subsisted with Allah, their religious knowledge and wisdom is complete and they possess good manners and modesty. They retain nothing of doubt, diabolical whispering and baseless misgivings. By virtue of their constant invocation of their Lord, they are not heedless and their certainty, sincerity and righteousness are strengthened. Nonetheless, their prayer, entreaty, worship and repentance are abundant and, as all virtues have accumulated in their person, they have become a friend of Allah.

This group of people possess utmost fear of deviating from the morality, manners and mandates of the Qur'an. They carry out the most delicate of matters in the greatest joy and jubilation. They are the perfect implementers of the Islamic way, for they know the way in which to struggle against their carnal self.

The tendency of some to speak in exaggerated terms regarding their spiritual master due to their excessive love, as well as the articulation of groundless, unjustified statements concerning the spiritual path of *sayr suluk* is most futile and is the cause of utter ruin. This path of Truth is the school of training and erudition for the friends of Allah with spiritual capacity.

It is the path of our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and his noble Companions. *Tariqa* does not enjoin sitting idly, asking from others and being a burden to individuals and society, as is purposefully and intentionally misrepresented to people, but commands working, cooperation and service to individuals and society. This is because the good pleasure and approval of Allah is to be found within endeavour and service. The expression, “Be not a burden but an aide,” is oft repeated.



The spiritual master does not immediately accept every aspirant who applies to undertake the spiritual journeying and training that is *sayr suluk*. He considers their character and manner. If he sees their intention to be pure and sees them as disposed to spirituality, he accepts; if he does not deem them as worthy, he defers. His intention is not to gather, at random, all those approaching him, but rather to identify those heroes of the heart who are worthy and enable them to attain perfection.

Due to the esteem and reverence shown to them by the people as a result of the profundity of their grasp of Divine majesty, true *shaykhs* of Sufi orders are incessantly bent double before Allah, glory unto Him. This is because they neither care for nor approve of such behaviour.

Even the Pride of Humanity, the Best of Creation, the most beloved of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, knew and made known only that which Allah, glorified be He, made known to him. As perfected spiritual guides, or *murshid al-kamil*, are of the heirs of the Prophets, they can only convey that which is conveyed to them. At times they are shown everything from the heavens to the earth, while at other times they cannot even see the heels of their own feet. Everything is with the command of the Necessarily Existent One (*Wajib al-Wujud*).

Some are granted sweeping authority at their disposal, while others have theirs curtailed. That is to say, without the will of Allah, glory unto Him, a servant would be powerless, whatever their spiritual rank.

The number of perfected spiritual guides (*murshid al-kamil*) on earth is very few indeed. Their authority exists to the extent of that bestowed upon them by Allah, glory unto Him. When a master visits one who is ill, or entreats Allah for their recovery, one must not expect definite recovery. However, with respect to the supplication of a beloved servant of His being accepted, Allah Almighty grants recovery and life to the ill on the brink of death by means of their supplication.



Spiritual Masters

Spiritual guides are people of perfection and virtue. Possessing an admirable morality, they are distinguished with such laudable qualities as compassion, mercy, generosity, humility, virtue, righteousness and insight. They have travelled the spiritual path.

All those who complete their spiritual journeying cannot have the authority to guide. This is the portion of only those fortunate servants whom Allah, glory unto Him, has honoured. We should also add that, *sayr suluk* has no end. This is because there is no limit to servant-hood and increasing in degree. Those who say, "My task is complete," have been detained or diverted half-way, while those who see their own shortcomings have advanced.

Aspirants of the spiritual path must **first and foremost** control their own state and actions, and strive to make up, with utmost sincerity, the prayers that they have missed.

The faces of the *murshid al-kamil* are luminous, their every act and manner is moderate, their speech is gentle and they are of a smiling countenance. They love and are loved by everyone. They do not covet anything of this world. They meet the needs of others and are sedate and imposing. They are true in speech and poised. Acclaim and

affront are the same in their eyes. They prefer seclusion, retreat and silence. They speak the truth and shun argument. They are a mercy and a blessing for the place in which they reside. Hunger, thirst and sleeplessness have become endeared to them. They neither pursue prosperity, nor ask for poverty. They consider whatsoever is given to them as better for their carnal soul. Their worship, prayer, entreaty and repentance are great. Their desire is but one – earning the pleasure and approval of Allah, glory unto Him.

The qualities listed are, however, rather the lesser of their gifts. If a description of these were to be undertaken, pages and volumes would not suffice. This privileged group are those special servants who have been honoured with every kind of favour of the Creator.

The majority of them have been given spiritual discovery and the ability to transcend time and be seen in more than one place simultaneously, but they have not considered this as a completion or perfection. Due to their knowing Allah as He deserves to be known, they have not made this a means for boasting and pride, but on the contrary, have seen themselves as equal with the earth and have disclosed this state to no one.



Murshid al-kamil Mawlana Ziya al-Din al-Qadiri al-Hindi, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

"Those who speak excessively in this matter are liars. If Allah, glory unto Him, had granted them such states and intuitions, they would have also known how to conceal them." This elevated saint resided in Medina. Passing away in 1983, he was buried in the Jannat al-Baqi cemetery. He worked many miracles.



The **second** thing that aspirants of *sayr suluk* must carry out, alongside making up for their missed prayers and fasts, pertains to the rights of others; if they owe anyone anything, they must pay their debt and if there are those whose hearts they have broken, they must make amends and, in so doing, attain peace.

The **third** very important matter is that the disciple should search for a true spiritual guide and, upon finding them, submit to them when and only if their actions and words are Islamically agreeable. The essential point requiring careful attention is ascertaining the master's state before Allah, glorified be He, and to then decide accordingly and not rush.

The fourth: if the sincerity of the person aspiring to undertake spiritual initiation (*su-*



luk) is strong, then Allah, glory unto Him, will bring the most fitting guide before them. One must not be deceived by every person who pays compliments.

It is said that in our day, certain individuals of weak religious devotion, women included, are desiring and ambitious for such an important post and its responsibility.

One must be meticulous, alert and clever. If a person falls into the hands of a person with erroneous belief – Allah forbid! – they can lose even their former state.

O Allah, just as You have enabled us to be of close acquaintance with the righteous and sincere to whom You have revealed Yourself and Your Lordship, allow us to have a share in their beautiful states and manners. Amin.



It is declared in a hadith: “*The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets.*”

An ‘alim, or a scholar, is the inheritor of the Prophets, as it is only they who know, love and fear Allah, glory unto Him, and fulfil his commands. **‘Abd al-Wahhab Sha’rani**, may Allah sanctify his secret, used to speak of his unlettered spiritual master **‘Ali al-Khawwas**, with great praise. He was unlettered, but was aware of the Divine truths. Allah, may He be glorified, grants some of



his servants an exceptional power of memory and allows great Qur'anic exegetes and scholars of hadith to emerge from among them. The narrator of the most hadith, **Abu Hurayra**, may Allah be well-pleased with him, is one of these.

Those who are *murshid al-kamil* and who know Allah ('arif billah), do not demand even the slightest thing in return for their services to the people. Moreover, they do not even expect the smallest return for their servant-hood to Allah, glory unto Him, and deem such expectation to be cause for their demotion in the eyes of Allah.

One who does not duly know Allah, glorified be He, and who constantly commits wrongdoing, irrespective of how much exoteric knowledge they possess, cannot be called an '*alim*'. This is because, had they known, they would not have had the audacity to sin and would have endeavoured to perfect themselves on the path of the Divine commandments.



On the basis of its importance, respected *Ustadh Mahmud Sami* used to explain often:

The Ottoman Sultan of the time used to constantly sit beside a pious person from among his relatives, showing him great respect and honour. This drew the envy of the



then *Shaykh al-Islam*. Eventually, despite holding great office outwardly, the *Shaykh al-Islam* invited this person and, without feeling any fear of Allah, caused the latter's death by means of the poisoned coffee he offered him.

The moral to be learned from this story is that no matter how much outward knowledge a person possesses, if love and fear of Allah has not taken root in their heart, there is no evil that they cannot commit, with the aid of their carnal self.

The saints, however, are those who have become knowers ('arif) of Allah and His attributes and who attain the level of gnosis and wisdom in their belief. Allah has bestowed upon them the highest of such favours. Regardless of whosoever it may be, though they may have attained the highest of ranks, no one can be absolved from the duty of servanthood. The obligatory and prohibited are obligatory and prohibited for them also.

The ranks of the Prophets are the highest, followed by the esteemed Companions.

Irrespective of how elevated the rank of the saints may be, it is not of the degree of the Companions. Moreover, even the level of **Uways al-Qarani**, who was favoured with having received the praise of the Prophet, cannot reach that of the Companions. Only



Allah, glory unto Him, knows perfectly the realm of the Unseen, the secrets contained within the hearts of people and the thoughts occurring to their minds.

The homage shown to people must only be in accordance with their piety and excessive homage and deference must be avoided. It is not appropriate to display exaggerated behaviour and go to extremes in this matter.



Ghaws al-'A'zam 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

"The Sufis, the travellers on the path of Allah, are guards and guardians of hearts and inner worlds. They guard the hearts of people from falsehood, immorality and negative inclination, emotion and desire. They subsist with none other than Allah Himself and remain with none save Him. Their deeds and actions are for Allah exclusively."

Again, he states:

Until the Sufis meet with Allah, there is no respite for their grief, lightness for their burden, rest for their eyes and reprieve in the trials and tribulations they endure. Their meeting with Allah, glory unto Him, are of two kinds.

The first of these is their union with Him spiritually while still in the world; such union is very rare.

The other is their meeting with Him in the Hereafter. When they unite with Allah, glorified be He, grace and relief come upon them. Prior to this, however, their suffering is incessant.

The Sufis ate of Allah's provisions of grace and favour. They drank from the wine of intimacy and beheld the door of nearness. They did not content themselves with pure knowledge but, on the contrary, witnessed. They endured patiently all difficulty and hardship.

They transcended themselves, all human beings and all those who were mortal and fleeting, such that goodness became most evident in their lives. When they met with their Lord, He edified them and acquainted them with His dominion. He taught them that none other than Him is to be found in the heavens and on earth and that it is Him and only Him Who gives and who inhibits, puts to motion and halts, ordains and imposes, commands and subjects to command and overwhelms.

The preoccupation of the Sufis is dispersing the material and spiritual bounties in their possession to those around them and to foster ease and tranquillity. They gather riches and distribute them. They obtain riches from the grace and mercy of Allah, glory unto Him, accumulate these



and distribute them to the poverty-stricken and needy. They donate these and pay the debts of those unable to do so. They are sultans, but not of this world. For sultans of this world seat themselves on wealth and riches but do not distribute them.



'Ala' al-Din 'Attar, may Allah sanctify his secret, narrates from **Muhammad Parisa**, may Allah sanctify his secret:

The purpose of austerity (riyada) is shedding carnal concerns and turning towards the realm of truth.

The purpose in *suluk* is the seeker's becoming freed of all concerns impeding the path to truth with their own willpower and effort.

The trial in this matter is that whenever a kind of worldly attachment is shown to the *murid*, if they find their heart as being free of that attachment, it no longer remains an obstacle for them. On the contrary, if they feel an inclination towards it, this becomes an obstacle for them. When our spiritual guide, **Baha' al-Din Naqshband** was to be clothed in a new shirt, it would be said to him that, "This shirt belongs to so and so," in so doing, the garment would be placed upon him like a borrowed item.

Explanation:

In order to attain union, one must know one's aim and objective. If the aim is not known, nothing will be known and no outcome can be achieved.

The aim of austerity, as stated by our master, is to sever the connection with carnality, external existence and form, and to turn to the inner realm and the world of the spirit and truth.

The *murid* must strive to erase everything in the external world making an impression on their mind, in order for the impediments on the path of truth to be erased and annihilated. If the aspirant fails to remove the passing thoughts (*khawatir*) and vain desires constituting an obstacle on their path, then they are considered to have been detained along the way.



Rabita To The Spiritual Guide

Again, '*'Ala' al-Din 'Attar*', may Allah sanctify his secret, states: "Spiritual attachment (*rabita*) and affinity to the *murshid*, while other in reality and unnecessary in the long run, is initially a means for union (*wusul*). The aspirant of this path is, at the outset, required to nullify all connections other than their spiritual guide and retain only their *murshid* in their heart."



Explanation:

Such affinity (*rabita*) with the *murshid* does not exist in reality and is ultimately unnecessary. Nonetheless, an aspirant is obliged to have such a connection in the initial stages.

Aspirants must abandon all the attachments in the hearts other than their *murshid* to enable them to reach the Truth. Most particularly, it is fitting that they focus on the point between the *murshid*'s eyebrows. A faithful aspirant who has affection for their *shaykh* does not need to exert effort to connect their heart spiritually. Due to the fact that their affection for their *shaykh* is in their heart, they are constantly together.

In the first lessons (including negation, or *nafy*, and confirmation, or *ithbat*) *rabita* is definitely undertaken. When the lesson advances to the level of the first contemplation of oneness (*ahadiyya*), bond with the *shaykh* is abandoned and one is together with Allah.

At this station, as the observation of the truth in the mirror of the *murshid* is deemed a deficiency, *rabita* must definitely be abandoned.



Once again, '**Ala'** al-Din '**Attar**', may Allah sanctify his secret, states (related from



Muhammad Parisa):

“The eminent figures of this path have said that Divine grace is attained through striving and the triumphant is only the one who strives.”

The spiritual help of the *murshid* is attained to the extent of their endeavouring in line with his advice. The meanings obtained without striving and exertion will be short-lived. If the impact in the *murshid*'s spiritual support to the *murid* is not deepened on the part of the *murid* through endeavour, it lasts only a few days.

What can the *murshid* offer the indifferent aspirant? This is why Mawlana Dawud commanded striving for us, and Divine help became a companion. All the time we spent in the spiritual exchange through conversation (*suhba*) of *Ustadh Naqshband* passed with endeavour. I know very few *murid* who do not spend their entire day in labour.”

One of the spiritual elders states:

“Sufism is spending time on the most valuable of things.”

This is true indeed. Implied in the labour mentioned above is devoting time wittingly and cleverly to the most precious things.



Four Principles

The advice of Musa Topbas, may Allah sanctify his secret, to his children, in spiritual education:

The aspirant must display diligence and great care in four matters.

1. Carrying out one's daily supererogatory devotions (*awrad*) in the propriety displayed by the *murshid*, with great care and by devoting the heart to Allah.

2. Attending the *suhbats* of the *murshid* or fellow Sufis.

3. Being of service to believers and to all creation within the needs of the age and in accordance with their capabilities and capacities.

4. We are obligated to protect our current state and take care to oppose the desires of the carnal soul and to develop and adorn our moral state in order to banish love of this world.

Rather than exhausting oneself more than necessary and without reason, one must prefer striving with sobriety and humility, doing so knowingly and intelligently.

If we can fulfil our responsibilities in this way with great sincerity and earnestness, Allah, glory unto Him, will allow His help to accompany us.



'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

"O son, so long as you remain at the rank of *murid*, take the sustenance that is your portion with the hand of lawfulness. Measure your earnings with the *shari'a* to determine whether or not they are lawful. Only take them if they are lawful.

When you attain the rank of 'the chosen' and the truthful ones (*Siddiqun*), take your share then with the hand of spiritual command.

When you attain the degree of those meeting with and in close proximity to Allah, take with the command of Allah, glory unto Him. At this rank, your portion will be directed towards you. The Creator commands and prohibits you and action then becomes manifest in you. The aspirant loses their personal will and only follows Allah's will.



According to 'Ala' al-Din 'Attar, may Allah sanctify his secret, (from Muhammad Parisa, may Allah sanctify his secret):

"The seeker must constantly consider their weakness and helplessness in the presence of the master. They must be in the realisation that reaching the goal can only be possible through obtaining the approval of their spiritual master. The seeker must know



that every road other than that of approval is blocked. So long as the seeker fails to maintain the regard of their *murshid*, they are obliged to recognise that their own works and value amount to nought.

If a faithful seeker and aspirant, as a possessor of truthful willpower, expends their existence in the existence of their master, they will no longer be able to find their own carnal self and at each and every introspection would be able to see none other than the reality of their master.

Ego, the greatest enemy, can be eliminated only by means of surrender to the *murshid*.

With the permission of Allah, glory unto Him, the inner world of many a possessor of ego has been purified, and they have attained repose and tranquillity commensurate with their submission to their *murshid*.

There is many an aspirant with profound worship who has not been able to receive their share in spirituality due to their lack of submission and because of their reliance upon their own actions; they have stifled the matter within the clamour of needless talk and have remained in the realm of shell and form. As a result of this deficiency, they have not been able to make even the slightest headway.

In this respect:

It has been said that, if you embark upon the path of Truth with your selfhood, your ego and arrogance, then have fear. But, if you have trodden upon the path of Truth in a great sense of nothingness and humility, by shedding your selfhood, then fear not.

Again it has been said:

“The aspirant, both near and far from their spiritual master, must unfailingly seek to walk upon the path earning the good pleasure of the latter.

The seeker is obligated to understand the points on which their *murshid*'s ‘gaze of approval’ is focussed and perform their deeds accordingly.

This task, however, is rather difficult and is contingent upon a deep attention and discernment, so long as Allah's aid and favour is not wanting.

This task is easy when Allah has made it thus. Otherwise, it is as arduous as to be unachievable.

Due to their failure to transcend the first level, or their own selves on the path to Truth, some of the aspirants of the present day expressly do the opposite of what is required in terms of service, let alone see the truth, and greatly sadden their master.



The underlying reason is their lack of understanding and surrender.



The select servants of Allah, being extremely careful with regards to their hearts and exerting great effort therein, have incessantly been preoccupied with His remembrance and mindful contemplation. In so doing, they have been guided with the favour of Allah and by means of pulling away from and shunning all other than Him, they have eternally remained in His presence.

The sustenance of the heart is attainment of love and experiential knowledge of Allah. Innate to the heart is to find the One who possesses disposal over it, and to incline towards and love Him unreservedly.

The destruction of the heart, however, is heedlessness of the Lord, inclination to all other than Him and, obeying the vain desires of the *nafs*, to plunge into the deep waters of worldly concern.

Hence, ignorance is annihilated from the heart and all other than the Lord (*masiwa*) erased with remembrance (*dhikr*) and mindful contemplation (*tafakkur*) and the heart is delivered from all infirmity and destruction. Through vigilant awareness (*muraqaba*), they reach the assembly of fellowship and serenity, and find never-ending life with knowledge and love of Allah. However, as



the body is the envelope and outer casing of the heart, it too must be protected, but this protection does not require painstaking effort and attention. It is the heart which essentially needs to be attended to. The body is in a position of servitude.

The body has a need for four things in the world: food and drink, clothing and shelter. One must fulfil these three rights of the body in moderation and as much as is necessary so as to enable its preservation and to ensure that it does not perish with hunger or gluttony – in the cold or the heat and through going to extremes in other matters – and thus remain healthy, enabling the heart to attain perfection within it.

Consequently, one who aspires spiritual knowledge of the Divine ('irfan) refrains from excessive foods and pleasures, shuns wearing colourful garments and adorning themselves and takes the path of forever keeping their heart clear of immorality and evil thoughts and embellishing it with good character.

They receive their share from the sustenance of the heart that is love and knowledge of Allah and in so doing their life finds the real life. If the sustenance of the body is excessive, it destroys them. In contrast, however, the greater the sustenance of the heart, the better and the more beneficial it is.



This is due to the fact that Allah, glory unto Him, has created the entire universe for humankind and has created humankind for them to know and love Him.

Thus, whosoever comes to know their Creator by means of self-knowledge and spends their existence in the way of His love have undoubtedly spent their life in accordance with their *raison d'être* and have attained an inexhaustible bounty before Allah. Being the select of the select, they have established themselves in the pavilion of truth.

Principles that the Disciple Should take into Account

It must be recognised that the real miracle is realising, to our last day, our duty of servant-hood to Allah, glory unto Him, without hatred or rancour, without any expectation and in complete sincerity and submission.

What, after all, can a lover expect from their beloved? Their effort and earnest endeavour must be to earn their pleasure and approval whether in states of hardship or relief.

Whilst the human being fulfils their duty of servitude with good and pure intention, Allah, glorified be He, rewards and adorns them with many miracles (*karama*) and grants them good morality. This is the very

miracle in itself.

He allows their hearts to taste of the pleasure of nurturing mercy towards servants; this is also a miracle.

He gives them humility, sorrow and expansiveness of heart; this too is a miracle.

He places upon them the garment of getting along well with others, the ability to forgive and shield the faults of others; this is another important miracle.

He bestows upon them the spiritual pleasure of love for His Beloved and all the others loved by Him. This is the greatest of all saintly miracles.

Above and beyond all these, as the most exalted and honoured of all, He bestows the state of perpetual remembrance and invocation of Him.

What falls upon us is to connect our hearts to the utmost degree, without cessation, to our Lord, glorified be He.

As long as the servant realises the loftiness in obedience to the Qur'anic commandments and the Sunna of the Prophet, without attachment to *masiwa*, and conscientiously continues thus, the grace of Allah Almighty deepens, their sincerity and certainty increases and they become one of the people of uprightness, in the strictest sense.



When they assume a state of stability in honesty and uprightness, they become one of the select.

When the true lover of Allah reaches this level, they become free – with His permission – of such malign characteristics as love of the world and of possessions, the desire to be held in regard and deference by the people, and love of rank and position.

The Lord of the Worlds, glory unto Him, loves such a servant and makes them beloved to His other servants. Those with views skewed and heterodox views, however, are exempt: as they remain within the narrow outlook of Satan and their carnal selves, they cannot love the friends of Allah. On the contrary, their animosity and hate increases.

DESCRIPTION OF THE 'ARIF

Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

As the relationship between the 'arif and their Lord is sound, their relationship with the people is also sound. The 'arif has devoted their body and life to their Lord and, giving their all to Him, their selfhood no longer intervenes. In this way, they have attained the rank of nearness to Allah and have reached repose. As the light of *ma'rifa* has descended upon the heart of the 'arif, it no longer contains desires pertaining to the world.

Their tongue is busy with recitation of Allah's names, their heart is brimming with His love and their mystery (*sirr*) is infinitely open to Him. The heart of the 'arif does not sleep, nor does it incline towards the world. This is because such a heart has experienced the realm of love and is full of the affliction of love and they are cognisant of their heart's being the focus of Allah's gaze. How can the heart, which eschews all other than Allah and becomes elevated, breathes



the air of nearness and reaches the assembly of intimacy and serenity become heedless of Allah and incline to the people?

The ascetic (*zahid*) is itinerant, while the '*arif* is in flight. The '*alim*' is below their words while the '*arif*' is above them. The '*arif*' makes mention of none save *ma'rifa* and the finest word is their silence. As the '*arif*' draws near to Allah, they pull away from the people. The '*arif*' feels need only for Allah and for this reason voices their needs to no one. The people love the '*arif*' because they are lowly before Allah.

The worship of the *zahid* is with attachment, while that of the '*arif*' is with spiritual taste. The *zahid* desires the Hereafter, while the '*arif*' desires their Lord. The *zahid* is with their *nafs*, while the '*arif*' is with Allah. The *dhikr* of the *zahid* is with their tongue, while that of the '*arif*' is with their heart and their life.

The heart of the *zahid* is busy with causes, while that of the '*arif*' is with Allah.

The believer sees with the light of Allah, while the '*arif*' sees with Allah.

The believer holds fast to the rope of Allah, while the '*arif*' holds fast to Allah.

The believer is satisfied with recitation of the names of Allah, while the '*arif*' is satisfied with Allah.

The people are attached to their *nafs*, while the *nafs* is the curtain of the Divine door. The '*arif*' has sacrificed their body to their spirit and their spirit to Allah. The ascetic looks to the people with their *nafs*, feels enmity and disappointment. The '*arif*' looks to the created with their Lord, through eyes filled with mercy, and is at peace.

The '*arif*', with their heart, departs not from tranquillity and with their spirit sees none save Allah. The '*arif*' is one whom no task and activity can distract from absorption with their Lord and who neither leaves the presence of Allah nor remains heedless for even a moment. The '*arif*' is one who themselves remains silent and Allah speaks of their mysteries. The '*arif*' is one who is saddened by nothing; they rejoice, with no sadness remaining, whatever the circumstances.

The '*arif*' is careful in reverence to Allah; they are meticulous in veneration of Him. They display their profound respect to Him by fulfilling the mandatory and avoiding the prohibited. The '*arif*' is one who does not divulge the secrets of Allah to those who are not qualified to hear them or cannot grasp them. They speak of their joy and anguish to no one.

The strength of the worshipper ('*abid*) is in bread and water, while the strength of the '*arif*' is with the invocation of Allah.



The *qibla* of the heedless is gold and silver, while the *qibla* of the ‘*arif* is the eternal light of Allah, the All-Compassionate.



‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani’s words concerning the ‘*arif*:

“Only the ‘*arif* can approach the sinner with a smile.”

Indeed, the ‘*arif* enjoins upon them what Allah has commanded and forbids what Allah has prohibited. Moreover, they endure with patience the torment and suffering coming from the wrongdoer. Only those who know Allah, glory unto Him, that is only the *Gnostics*, can realise all this. The ascetics, worshippers and disciples cannot bear this.

How is it possible for the *Gnostics* not to have compassion, as they are at the level of mercy, repentance and penitence.

The morality (*akhlaq*) of the ‘*arif* is that of the morality of Allah, glory unto Him. He strives to save the wrongdoer from the clutches of Satan, the carnal soul and vain desires.

Would you not be alarmed if you were to see your child being held prisoner in the hands of an unbeliever?

The ‘*arif* is precisely thus.

In his eyes, all human beings have the status of their children. They address them with the tongue pronouncing the Divine commands and prohibitions.

Subsequently, as they inform them of that which would lead them to sorrow, they take pity on them. They see in them the Divine actions and await the emergence of Divine destiny and a decree from the door of judgement and knowledge. However, they conceal this and address the people with the judgement from Divine command and prohibition. The inner soul does not bespeak with that pertaining to essence, or with experiential knowledge.

Possessing an unshakeable belief, the '*arif*' is distinct and separate from other people with their heart, essence and meaning. Such is the rank they have attained that they are not able to avert each matter that comes upon them as they have been cast into the presence of Allah, having been stripped of every strength and power. When they reach this rank, however, they are showered with goodness and blessings from all directions.



Again, he states:

"The believer is a stranger in the world, while the *zahid* is a stranger when it comes to matters pertaining to the Hereafter. As for the '*arif*', they are a stranger in the com-



pany of everything other than Allah, glory unto Him.”

And again:

“The world is the beloved of the carnal souls and the Hereafter is the beloved of hearts.

Allah, glory unto Him, is the Beloved of Souls.

Furthermore:

“When the ‘arif purifies their heart of the worldly and human beings, it is as though their material existence is removed. The emotion enabling their physical body to feel concerns of self-interest disappears. No change arises within them in the event of disasters and calamities. At that point, their existence and nonexistence is one and the same.

Under no circumstances do they desire or request anything on their own account.

They are ambitious for nothing. How can the Gnostics not be esteemed by Allah, glory unto Him, when they have attained union with Him, have sacrificed everything on His path and have devoted their lives, possessions and souls in His way. They have conducted every task with Allah and on the path of His good pleasure, have become His elect servants and have merited the title of ‘the ‘arif.

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As '*arif*' literally means one who knows, that which needs to be known first and foremost is Allah, glory unto Him.

The masses cannot fathom the value of the Gnostic in the eyes of Allah as their inner worlds of the heart and spirit are closed to them.

The masses focus on external worship and forms.

Due to their closed spiritual insight (*basira*), they see only with the physical eyes. They cannot unravel and understand the truth.

Since they are unable to know the inner riches of the *Gnostics* and their value before Allah, they are strangers to the Divine manifestations exhibited on their person.

They are preoccupied mostly with externalities. For instance, saying "this person fasts constantly, such-and-such person prays this many units of prayer in the middle of the night, so-and-so continuously recites the entire Qur'an," they show great deference to these people.

Whereas, in comparison, the worship of the '*arif*' which appears little on the outside, is more valuable than the large amount worship of ordinary people.

As a case in point, the worship of the esteemed Companions, may Allah be well

pleased with them, perhaps appeared little on the outside. However, they loved, knew and submitted to Allah, glory unto Him, to such a degree that at the moment of any affliction or calamity they would delegate their affairs and surrender to Allah with great contentment and feel not even the slightest sorrow.

They would most readily dedicate their lives, spirits, wealth and possessions in the way of Allah and would feel immense delight at having done so.

The '*arif*' mixes with the people and does not pay much attention to attire and apparel. Nor do they attach importance to fluency and oratory in view of attracting the masses and gaining fame. They prefer seclusion, but also join the crowds for the purpose of giving service. They do not formulate personal prayers but instead prefer reciting the Qur'anic verses containing supplications.

The difference between the *zahid* and the '*arif*' is immeasurably great. Just as every *zahid* is not an '*arif*', so too, every scholar is not an '*arif*'. However, those who know Allah are at the same time a scholar and *zahid*.

By virtue of the importance of the task, great masters ('*arif billah*) have invariably compiled and classified their works on the realm of the heart and have always centred their discussions on such matters.

Even those well versed in the discipline of jurisprudence have referred sections dealing overtly with matters of the *shari'a* to the jurists.

Implied in "The sleep of a scholar is worship," are the friends of Allah who act upon their knowledge. While the supererogatory prayers and fasts of the Gnostics may appear to be small outwardly, they have made hunger their mark and have refrained from eating and drinking, only doing so when necessary so as not to offend their friends.

They have continued their supererogatory prayers constantly and have connected their hearts to their Lord, not leaving His presence even momentarily.

Some of them have advanced from the attributes of their Lord to His essence, becoming an ocean of compassion even opening up to the most rebellious of servants, and have wept, in the nights, for their improvement.

The spiritual knowledge of those who visit the '*arif* with devotion increases and love of Allah becomes manifest in their heart.

A complete description of the '*arif*' is impossible. Only Allah, glory unto Him, knows their true value as He has loved them and has made Himself beloved to them.

The blessings of Paradise and the punishment of Hellfire do not occupy a place in the mind of the ‘arif.



There is a story, which goes like this:

One day, **Malik ibn Dinar and Thabit al-Bunani went to visit a contemporary of Hasan al-Basri, Rabia al-Adawiyya.**

Addressing Malik ibn Dinar, Rabia said:

“Tell me, why do you worship Allah?”

Malik ibn Dinar replied: “I desire Paradise.”

Without answering this, when Rabia immediately turned to Thabit to ask: “What is it that you want from Allah through your servanthood?” Thabit replied, “I fear Hellfire.” Following this, Rabia al-Adawiyya continued:

“Malik, you are like a worker who works ambitiously for a single thing only.

Thabit, as for you, you resemble a slave who works for fear of flogging.”

These words affected Malik and Thabit deeply. They inquired as to the reason:

“O Rabia, tell us about your worship?”
Rabia responded with the following:

“Love of Allah and profuse spiritual ardour and passion.”



During one of his travels, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), upon him be peace, encountered a group of people. Their bodies had grown thin and they had lost their colour. When he saw their state, he asked:

"What has happened to you? Why have you become thus?"

He received the following response: "We have become thus due to our fear of the flame of Hellfire." Thereupon, 'Isa, upon him be peace, said:

"Allah has deemed deliverance of those who fear, obligatory upon Himself."

He then encountered another group of people. At first sight, he saw them to have become even thinner and with a colour more altered. He asked them also:

"What has happened to you?" to which he received the reply:

"We are devotees of Paradise." Again, as he had stated to those before, he declared:

"Allah has deemed granting that which the likes of you seek, obligatory upon Himself."

He then continued on his way. Subsequently, he saw a group of people even frailer and more altered than the first and second groups. Again, he asked:

"What is this state that I find you in?" They replied:



“Love of Allah has rendered us thus.” In response, Prophet ‘Isa, upon him be peace, contemplated for a while and then said:

“You are nearer to Allah. You are those nearer to Allah, you are those nearer to Allah.”



Ma'rifa is the knowledge of ecstasy (*wajd*).

Ma'rifa is the knowledge of spiritual ardour (*shawq*).

Ma'rifa is the knowledge of ecstatic love ('*ashq*).

Ma'rifa is a taste and discrimination. However, the Creator, the Most High, allows whomever He loves and wills to taste of this great bounty. This tasting changes from person to person. Some taste little, others to their full and others yet to a sufficient amount. Others still taste to the utmost, whether they lose their mind or withdraw to the mountains.

It is stated in a hadith:

“There is an assured paradise in the world. One who finds it no longer has a desire for Paradise. This paradise is *ma'rifa*.

Again, it is reported: “The people of the world departed from it without ever having tasted its sweetest thing. This is knowledge of

DESCRIPTION OF THE 'ARIF

Allah, such that it is sweeter and more pleasurable than any other thing in this world."

A couplet:

Had the lovers been in the paradise of 'irfan of today,

What would they care for the pure maidens and companions promised for tomorrow.

Junayd al-Baghdadi, may Allah sanctify his secret, asked **Sari al-Saqati**, may Allah sanctify his secret:

"How did you spend the night?"

Sari al-Saqati, may Allah sanctify his secret, said:

"There is no such thing as morning or night next to Allah." That is, the *Gnostics* are not aware of time, as they are at every moment engaged with experiential knowledge of Allah and have become entranced in the presence of their Lord.

Again, **'Abd al-Qadir Jilani**, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:

The heart of an 'arif does not stop taking one state after another, even for a moment, such that they strengthen in renunciation (*zuhd*) while among the people. They do not follow the people in their evil traits and habits and remain distant from them. They desire only Allah and love only Him.

Meanwhile, their reliance in Allah increases and is consolidated and they no longer take anything from anyone.

If they were to take from others, they spend this is the path of Allah. They also strengthen with respect to the intellect and perception they have in common with others and attain superiority therein. Moreover, an added intellect and perception is granted to them from Allah, glorified be He.

Dawud al-Kabir, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

"The heart of the Gnostic resembles a fire. It burns and scorches a human structure but, after burning it down, does not leave it in destruction. It implores Allah, glory unto Him. As a result of this entreaty, it is revived and in better manner than formerly.

The Noble Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declares:

"God was [is], and there was [is] nothing other than Him."

Dawud al-Kabir, may Allah sanctify his secret, affirms:

A true possessor of 'irfan cannot be and remain with other than the Divine essence, whatever the circumstances. In the event of their being attached to a blessing coming to them by means of manifestation, a veil is drawn between them and their Lord.

A person who knows Allah, glory unto Him, and who attains the elevated degrees bestowed by Him, will insist on being only at Allah's essence, not at His attributes. This is the station of only the great saints ('arif billah).

Allah, glory unto Him, declares in a *qudsi* hadith:

"My servant, if you were to come to me with intimate knowledge of Me ('irfan), I would write for you as much reward as [the number of] created beings."

Dawud al-Kabir, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

One reason behind the worshippers' fleeing the people is that they do not know and understand the course of Divine manifestation. They are ignorant in this sense.

If they were able to perceive these hidden mysteries within them, they would certainly have experienced familiarity and intimacy, just as the intimate knowers show familiarity and intimacy to worshippers.

Again, in one of his spiritual conversations, he explained:

The deeds performed by possessors of intimate knowledge in the world are neither for the attainment of a particular state, nor a particular spiritual station. They perform



their deeds only to confirm their standing and station in the Divine presence.

What more can they desire after having attained this? All states and stations are folded up therein. Take what you will and wear what you choose... How fortunate is the one who finds this!

However much the Gnostic is praised, they still cannot be described as they deserve to be described. This is because their every state is with their Lord and they find tranquility only with Him. Neither their sleep, nor their wakefulness can separate them from their Beloved. In their eyes, there is none other than Allah. Only Allah knows. They have forgotten even themselves and are in a state of constant amazement. They have no consideration other than Allah. They are outwardly deaf and mute and are naught. They have come into existence with nothingness. They are mute, but possess cognition of spiritual events. They are deaf, but are aware of all spiritual feeling and emotion.

The *Gnostics* are at the station of resignation (*rida*). Their hearts are calm in the face of all events. Resignation constitutes being pleased with whichever sorrow of the heart. The intimate knower has made loving Allah and being resigned to their fate a plea-

sure and joy, as the origin of their resignation is reliance upon Allah, glory unto Him.



From the Marifetname:

There are four matters which ensure happiness in this world and the Hereafter: **Reliance (tawakkul), entrustment (tafwiz), patience (sabr) and resignation (rida).**

The head and root of resignation to Divine decree is the essence of worship. Resignation and contentment is the wealth of happiness. The aim of Islam is to earn the good pleasure and approval of Allah. Every fortune is to be found in contentment and resignation. All those who are resigned to their fortune experience ease and serenity. There is no treasure like resignation. One who possesses it does not feel sorrow; one who is resigned to Divine Decree has found soundness of body and contentment of heart. One who is yielding to Divine Decree does not beseech anyone and leaves not the presence of Allah, glory unto Him, for even a moment.

Resignation is that which causes you to neither ask a bounty from Allah, glorified be He, nor complain of His punishment. One who is acquiescent to their fate is not saddened by anything. What a beautiful temperament is resignation and surrender. One



who surrenders to Divine Decree finds their Lord. There is no resignation like surrender and no ease like resignation.

True resignation is a servant's declaring:

"O Allah, if You bestow upon me, I will accept.

If You take from me, I will be pleased.

If You call me, I will come."

Whosoever possesses these three qualities is from among the intimate knowers. In other words, this entails fleeing from everything to Allah, or being with Allah in everything, or seeking the approval of Allah in everything.

Resignation is that which causes one not to be grieved by affliction as much as one is pleased with blessing. The noble character of the Gnostics and the friends of Allah is resignation to Divine Decree and love of Allah.

Resignation is the most excellent of deeds and the finest of good character.

Tawakkul is Trust in Allah.

Taslim is submission to Allah's command.

Tafwiz is referring all affairs to Him.

Rida is not shunning, but being pleased with whatever comes to the carnal self, good and bad.

WORDS OF THE FRIENDS OF ALLAH CONCERNING THE 'ARIF

Bayazid al-Bistami, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“The fountain from which an ‘arif drinks water never becomes murky and every murkiness reaching it attains clarity.”

“The ‘arif is pleased with nothing other than union.”

“The ‘arif is airborne while the *zahid* is itinerant. One flies while the other walks.”

“The heart of the ‘arif is like the flambeau within a lamp made of glass that is crystal clear. They illuminate the spiritual realm; what fear can they have of the dark?”

‘Abd Allah ibn Manazil, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:

“The ‘arif does not deem strange anything (that comes from Him).”

Yahya ibn Mu’adh, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:



“[The ‘arif] is a person for whom nothing is dearer than the remembrance of Allah and recitation of His names.”

Junayd al-Baghdadi, may Allah sanctify his secret states:

“The ‘arif is one who travels at lofty levels and who cannot be veiled or halted by anything.”

“The sign of one who knows intimately is that their general state is of reflection, their gaze is to take heed, their words are for praise and laudation of Allah and their deeds are in adoration.”

Bishr al-Khafi, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:

“If there exist elect servants of Allah, then these are the intimate knowers.”

“Those who know God most intimately are such a community that none other than Allah can recognise them.”

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“Only those learned servants of Allah fear Him.”

“The intimate knower must not describe, but have fear. That is, one who describes themselves with intimate knowledge is not an intimate knower.”

cetics. The sultans of the ascetics are those with intimate knowledge.”

“The deeds of the possessor of intimate knowledge forever look to Allah.”

Bayazid al-Bistami, may Allah sanctify his secret, affirms:

“The fire is torment for those who do not know Allah. However, those who know Allah are torment for the fire.”

“Intimate knowledge is not a dry claim. [This is seen in that] one who loves does not complain of their beloved.”

‘Abd al-Wahid Zayd asked someone:

“What is the spiritual aspiration (*himma*) of the possessor of experiential knowledge? What must it be?”

“Reaching Allah.”

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, may Allah sanctify his secret, asked an elderly man:

“Can the world change the heart of the gnostics?”

“[Even] the Hereafter cannot change it.”

“Does the Gnostic feel regret over anything other than Allah?”

“Do they know anything other than Allah over which they might experience regret?”

“Does the Gnostic feel yearning towards their Lord?”



“Do they ever leave their Lord for a moment so as to have such yearning?”



Abu ‘l-Mawahib al-Shadhili, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“An intimate knower, throughout their lifetime, is engaged with developing their spiritual condition. As for their fame, they find it after their death.”

“Why does the gnostic appear small in the eyes of people? This is perhaps a matter of keen interest.”

“As the station of the gnostic increases, they become abased in the eyes of the people. Their similitude is that of a star. As the star ascends, it appears smaller in the eyes of people. With whom does the fault lie: the star or the general populace? The fault lies with neither. The shame entirely, rests with those eyes which cannot see it fully.

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri’s questions and the responses of the elderly man continue:

“Who are the lovers?”

“Those with intimate knowledge of Allah.”

“They spend their entire effort in the path of sincerity. The character of those who have attained the degree of intimate knowers cannot be described. They are with

carnal soul, but are far from carnal souls.

They walk among the people, but the evil of the people cannot harm them. They are possessors of hearts, but their hearts are with Allah. Only goodness arises from their hearts.

They have many states but are beyond these. They live as though unaware of their surroundings and time is of no consequence to them.

Nothing can separate them from Allah's command. They proceed in complete straightforwardness with Divine command.

They walk in humility before the majesty of Allah. Their hearts throb in fear of separation and severance from His mercy.

Their hearts are illuminated with love and adoration and burst forth with the light of experiential knowledge.



'Ali Sayyid, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

"The scholar acquires knowledge and learning while the ignorant remains as they are and increase in ignorance. The intimate knower, however, is on the path of intimate knowledge. As for the denier, they persevere in their denial. All these are contained within the ambit of the following Qur'anic verse:



“Say: “Every one acts according to his own character (made up of his creed, worldview and disposition), and your Lord knows best who is better guided in his way.”

In another one of his talks, he discusses being an intimate knower of Allah, glorified be He:

“When a person becomes an intimate knower of Allah, what they see thereafter is Truth.

What other than the Truth remains, besides misguidance?

Those of no avail to experiential knowledge cannot gain anything from the Gnostics. Even if they were to gain anything, their benefiting therefrom would not be possible, as they do not possess the groundwork favourable to it.

Again, he states in relation to love and nearness to the Truth:

“Do you seek to measure the magnitude of love? Then look at the magnitude of experiential knowledge. However much is your intimate knowledge of Allah that is the extent of your love.

The amount of this love in turn constitutes the measure of one's nearness to Allah.

Again, he affirms:

“The heart of the intimate knower is the realm of being in the Divine presence. As for their feelings, they are its doors.”

Whoever is graciously near the feelings of an intimate knower, the doors of the realm of that presence will be opened to them.

Dawud al-Kabir said in one of his talks:

“The renunciation of the gnostics is on account of a person who is nobler, greater and more esteemed. Their state in both realms is this.

The meaning of this statement is as follows:

The gnostics cast everything to one side, for the sake of Allah, and are enveloped in the veil of renunciation and abandonment in their every state.

Again, he used to say:

The intimate knower is such that they become an enemy of the evil affairs of their carnal soul. Their enmity to their carnal self is only to this extent and does not go beyond this. Their situation is not conducive to anything more.

The enmity of the gnostic towards their carnal self, however, differs greatly and is more superior. They are an enemy of their carnal soul itself.

He has also stated:



The intimate knower does not speak truth with the tongue; in the event that they speak, their single word cannot be contained by the universe with respect to its meaning.

He again states:

Following an intimate knower, be it with a single step, is better than walking hundreds of thousands kilometres in the way of your own vain desire and the whims of your carnal soul.

Shah ibn Shuja' Kirmani, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

"None of the acts of worship of a ascetic can equal the love felt towards the friends of Allah.

One who loves the friends of Allah, loves Allah. One who is loved by the friends of Allah is one whom Allah loves.

Ibn 'Ata, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

No act of worship is difficult for one endowed with experiential knowledge for there is no difficulty or hardship for them. Difficulty and hardship is for others. Worship for them is as easy as to inhale and exhale.

'Abd Allah Qurayshi, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

"Whosoever upsets one of the servants

possessing spiritual knowledge of Allah or one of His friends has their heart sealed.

One who continues to cause them distress will not die until they face depravity and corruption in their faith.

'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:

“That which the worshipper and ascetic yearns for most passionately in the world is to work miracles. Their longing in the Hereafter is Paradise. The yearning for the intimate knower in the world is soundness of belief. That is, the desire to pass through this world with belief. Their yearning in the Hereafter is deliverance from Hellfire. The intimate knower abandons not this yearning for even a moment, until it is declared to their hearts:

“What is the meaning of this anxiety and consternation? Be calm. Remain steadfast. Your belief is determined and established. The believers take the light of their belief from you. You will be an intercessor in the Hereafter and are among those whose word will be deemed acceptable. You will be the means for a great many people to be saved from Hellfire. You will be in the presence of the master of all intercessors, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings. Abandon your worry and alarm and preoccupy yourself with other things.



These words revealed to the gnostic's heart constitute a Divine decree to the effect of the lastingness of their belief and experiential knowledge, their deliverance and their walking with the Prophets and the truthful ones, or the elect, on the Day of Judgement. As this decree of security is repeated, their fear of Allah increases, their good manner deepen and they give thanks for the bounties with which they have been favoured.

This is by virtue of the fact that they know, and ponder the meanings of the following Qur'anic verses:

«Surely God does whatever He wills.»

(Hajj, 22:14)

“He cannot be called to account for whatever He does, but their false deities (they have adopted from among conscious beings) are accountable.” (Anbiya, 21:23)

“But you cannot will (to do so) unless God wills – the Lord of the worlds.” (Takwir, 81:29)

THE NEED FOR A MURSHID

'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“There is no salvation for you so long as you do not adhere to the word of Allah, the Qur'an, and the Sunna of His Messenger.”

One of the masters, may Allah have mercy on him, says:

“Whosoever does not have a master, Iblis (Satan) is his master.”

Follow a spiritual master, or *murshid*, who knows the word of Allah and the Prophetic practice and adheres to them.

Entertain good opinions of them.

Learn from them that which you do not know.

Act with good manner and propriety in their presence

Observe proper etiquette and righteous moral conduct in keeping company with them.

Only then will you attain salvation and deliverance.



So long as you fail to follow spiritual masters well versed in the Divine book, the morality of the Prophet and who act in accordance with their commands and injunctions, you can never be delivered and saved. Have you not heard the axiom:

“Whoever acts with nothing but their own reason and sees themselves as independent of others goes astray.”

Purge your carnal self of evil deeds and conduct through participation in the spiritual conversations of those more learned. Train your spirit and beautify your conduct and morality.

Attend to the training of your own spirit and the reformation of your own self, first and then to that of others. The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, declares:

“Begin with the training of your own carnal soul and then turn to others.”



Es'ad Erbili, may Allah sanctify his secret, elucidates the qualities of the master authorised to guide others in the following manner:

* Acting in straightforwardness, in accordance with the requirements of pure Shar'ia.

- * Guiding others to observation of the commandments of the *Shari'a* and invocation of Allah Almighty.
- * Offering counsel to all human beings, as far as possible.
- * Showing the people the path of piety and straightforwardness.
- * Forbidding those things that have been religiously prohibited.
- * Looking to all creation with the eye of mercy and compassion.
- * Treating younger ones with compassion and elders with respect.
- * Command of jurisprudence and the tenets of belief in Unity in as much as is required in order to train the disciples.
- * Veiling and concealing those shortcomings and failings of the believers which the master has seen.
- * The *murshid*, if they among the people of spiritual intuition, must be cognisant of the perfection and propriety of hearts and the diseases and afflictions of the carnal soul. If they are not among the saints of spiritual unveiling or insight, they must know how to recognise this from their outward state or condition.
- * They must be individuals of perfected character possessing richness of heart, but



who are also angered by those things with which Allah is displeased.

* All that except abandonment of all sins, observance of the religiously obligatory and the Prophetic example and sending as many salutations and benedictions to the Prophet as is possible, is not essential to be a spiritual guide.

Question: Is it necessary for the master with authority to guide others to perform saintly miracles?

Answer: Performing saintly miracles is not essential, as such acts of wonder have not been reported from the majority of the Companions and their successors. Moreover, no such extraordinary favour has been reported in relation to Abu Bakr, the truthful one, despite his being the most virtuous of the noble Companions. May Allah be well pleased with them all.

Imam Ghazali, may Allah sanctify his secret, states in his treatise on invocation (*dhikr*):

For the seeker to purge themselves of their evil character traits and replace them with good moral conduct, it is imperative that they seek the guidance and undergo the training of a spiritual master.

In point of fact, training resembles the work of a farmer who strives to clear the

soil of thistles and thorns to enable trees and plants to flourish.

Najm al-Din Kubra, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

Establishing a spiritual bond or a *rabita* with the thought of the master through the heart is the greatest principle with respect to gaining spiritual energy (*fayd*). Moreover, the mirror of the heart can on no account attain purity without connecting to the master.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, may Allah sanctify his secret, concurs with and reinforces this same view in his work.

In his commentary on the verse, “... keep the company of the truthful,” **Najm al-Din Kubra**, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

Implied in ‘the truthful’ are the spiritual masters. They have been charged by Allah Almighty with training human beings and enabling them to attain the degree of the truthful with the power of their sainthood.

Ruzbihan Baqli asserts in ‘Ara’is al-bayan:

Allah Almighty has assuredly established an eternal Sunna (way) such that one who fails to fulfil this cannot reach the Truth. And this is the act of attaching the heart to a perfected spiritual master.

This way can only be found by those aspirants whom Allah favours with a guide with intimate knowledge of Him, and who can experience the exhilaration of the religious understanding and the spiritual ascensions of their master's method of instruction.

That perfected spiritual master with intimate knowledge becomes a conduit between them and Allah Almighty and, assuredly, the choice is within the sphere of Divine power. He gives to whom He wills and holds back from whom He wills.



The devout celestial pole (*Qutb al-Rababi*) **Es'ad Erbili**, may Allah sanctify his secret, states in his *Divan*:

Upon arriving at the perfected pir, the heart becomes tender even if stone,

If your ego is the Pharaoh, than certainty it acquires and a lowlier state than an ant.

If you have grasped your helplessness, a mountain will your slightest deed become.

Your putridity will always become sound and all your poison will become honey.

The mountains, orchards of fruit for you and the whole world a garden.



Explanation:

The bad state of a person who submits to a perfected spiritual master becomes reformed. Their waywardness and unrestraint is removed and their belief strengthens. Their heart, formerly as hardened as stone, attains repose and softens. As it knows Allah more intimately, their hearts love and spiritual ardour increases and a predisposition to remembrance of Allah surfaces.

The greatest enemy of the human being is their carnal self, or ego, with its Pharaoh-like disposition, which becomes stripped of its former vices and transforms into a praiseworthy morality.

If a person perceives and acknowledges their wrongs before Allah and pursues the path of humility, Allah Almighty grants even their most seemingly insignificant deed a reward and degree as grand as the mountains.

Their corrupt, heedless states become firm and sound. Their bitter, poisonous states become as delectable and sweet as honey, as they have become aware of their wrong; that is, they have perceived and conceded their weakness and helplessness before the Divine Power and Majesty.

It is for this reason that their former most arid, infertile and heedless deeds become, under the watch of the perfected master and



with the permission of Allah Himself, like fruitful, productive soil.

From the statements above, we come to understand the necessity of submission to a perfected spiritual guide and learn that this subsequently signifies significant change in that person's temperament, morality and belief.



A discussion on the necessity for a spiritual master throughout spiritual journeying in the work, Mirsad al-'Ibad includes the following:

Take as a guide a perfected master in your journeying in the way of religion and in order to become acquainted with the realm of certainty. The master to whom you are to commit must possess both sainthood as well as spiritual powers. No one else can cure your afflictions. It is better to progress in one place rather than to be lacking in everything. It is better that you sleep in a tent than parade about with idols in your hands.

An important letter:

The reality of worship is to lose your self-hood, tremble before the majesty of Allah Almighty, implore Him and be bent double. These meanings emanate in the heart through beholding the Divine grandeur. This happiness is contingent upon love and af-

fection.

The emergence of love and affection, however, is possible only through obedience to the Master of all Creation.

And obedience is connected to knowing the road to obedience. One must, of course, reach out to the scholars, the heirs of the religious sciences, with the condition, however, of steering well clear of those scholars who use religious scholarship as a means to worldly gain and have no other ambition than to assume a certain position.

One must also shun those ‘dervishes’ who dance, listen to music and accept whatever is offered them.

Abstinence from ideas and understandings of unity which contradict the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a* understanding is also a must. Furthermore, it is also necessary to realise the acquisition of knowledge as a requirement of following the Messenger of Allah.



Mawlana Sa'd al-Din Qashqari, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

A treasure is wasted away with each breath that a human being takes. One must know with each breath that Allah is present everywhere at every instant. When this consciousness holds command over a person, it



is accompanied by a sense of shame before Allah and heedlessness departs.

The heart in a human being is one. If it were to drape itself over the world, it would be deprived of Allah. If it turns to Allah, a window opens within it through which the light of the sun of Divine effusion enters. This light brings to life every particle from the East to the West. Only those houses without windows will be deprived of a share in this light.



Mawlana Jami', may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

The blessed words of the saints have been gathered from the light of the Muhammadi Truth (*haqiqat Muhammadiya*). The necessary deference shown towards the Qur'an and hadith must also be shown to the words of the saints. One who seeks their own fortune must display decorum and respect to the words of the saints.

Again, he states:

If a person accumulates all the knowledge of those preceding and succeeding them in their person, they would reap no benefit from these at their last breath until the consciousness of being in the presence of Allah and knowledge of Him takes root within them.

'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, may Allah sanctify his secret, again declares:

The aspirant is, in any case, in need of a guide, for they are in such a desert that therein is found scorpions, snakes and other such scourges. There is thirst as well as ravenous, wild beasts. The guide protects them from these threats and dangers. He shows them the water springs and leads them to the areas wherein are located fruit trees. However, on their own, in the event of their being without guide, they stumble into places where are present savage beasts, scorpions and snakes and, as such, perish.

O traveller on the road of the world! Do not part ways with the caravan, the guide and your fellow travellers! Otherwise, your wealth and your sense of safety and security will be lost.

O traveller heading toward the Hereafter! Forever remain with a guide, until they enable you to reach your destination.

Serve your guide, which is your spiritual master, along the way. Be well mannered towards them and do not disobey them. They will thus teach you truths and draw you to them. Subsequently, upon witnessing your nobility, truthfulness, commitment and capacity, they will be intent upon your viceroyship upon the path. In this way, they

will make you the leader of the journey and master of the travellers. They will appoint you as vicegerent in their place throughout the journey.

They will eventually bring you to the presence of their Prophet and entrust you to him. They will bring you closer to him. Subsequently, they will call for your regency over hearts, spiritual states and meanings. Hence, you will be an envoy among the servants of Allah and become an attendant in the company of His Messenger. As per the requirements of your mission, you will both come among the people and go to the presence of Allah.

However, all this is such that it cannot be possible through retiring into seclusion and with empty wishes. It is the acts of goodness of a person that confirms the existence of this capacity in the heart.

The friends of Allah emerging from among society's individuals are as rare as one in a million. They listen to the word of Allah with their hearts and their spiritual aspects. And they confirm this beautiful voice that is the Divine word with the deeds of righteousness that their bodily limbs and organs perform.

The preoccupations of people are all different and distinct.

Some are seekers of position and fame.

Some are slaves of money, possessions and wealth.

Some are servants of dignitaries of state.

Some are captives of their carnal soul, clothes and apparel.

Some rely on their fasts.

Some are dependent on their ritual prayers.

Some depend upon the Prophetic Tradition they narrate.

Some fear Hellfire and rely on this fear.

Some perform many a deed so as to enter Paradise and trust in these deeds.

Aside from all of these, there are also those whose hearts beat for Allah, are attached to Him and who are together with Him. They are not attached to the finite and set their hearts on the transitory. They strive with all their might for the religion of Allah to remain standing and facilitate this.

Such esteemed individuals possessing these qualities should be sought and, if found, one must affiliate themselves to them following adequate investigation.

A *hadith qudsi* reveals:

"My friends are beneath my cloaks; none other than I know their truths."

We ought consider that we are unable to find our way to the physical Ka'ba, whose road is apparent, without a guide. Those who have gone there have seen it and have determined its distance.

So consider walking upon the path of truth and arriving at one's object: thousands of points invisible at first glance and thousands of intervals...

The exalted Prophets, the representatives of the Message, have walked this path. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon all of them. Bear in mind that not even a single station is outwardly visible. The travellers on this path have proceeded with lofty aspiration and a gaze directed towards their goal. Thus, they have not attached themselves to anything other than love on this path.

THOSE FROM AMONG THE HEEDLESS MASSES AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT

In whatever area of expertise one steeps oneself, whether literary scholar, interpreter of the Qur'an, scholar of the *hadith*, jurist, or theologian, if they fail to shun with their hearts the world and worldly desire, love of wealth and position, the public and all corporeal delights and dedicate themselves to the path of experiential knowledge of Allah, practising in word and in action the religious truths, they are considered to be of the heedless masses ('awam).

A person must learn what they learn for the sake of Allah and do what they do only for Him. They will, therefore, abide by all the limits and conventions of the *shari'a* and be meticulous and painstaking in their worship.

Abandoning all that Allah Almighty and His Messenger dislike, they will purge their hearts of attachment to possessions and position.



They will see the world as without worth and value and will remove the Hereafter from their heart also. Not looking to the Gardens of the highest level of Paradise, their entire effort and endeavour will be spent in the way of knowing Allah, loving Him and servant-hood to Him, so as to earn His love.

Such a person is considered to be of the elect (*khawas*). If they do not do as such and instead lose their heart to the pursuit of any other, they will perish in this valley. All these dangers stem from the difficulty of this path. Nine out of ten of those who ignore this matter face ruin.

Those who do not allow themselves to be engulfed by the waves of this sea of plurality and who focus their gaze on Allah find the hidden pearl and attain to bliss. They come to know the mystery within the trove. For such servants, it is stated in the Qur'an:

“But, as for those for whom the decree of ultimate good has already gone forth from Us, they will be kept away from it (Hell).” (Anbiya, 21:101)

“...such indeed are those who are the triumphant.” (Nur, 24:52)

“Your Lord knows whatever their bosoms conceal and whatever they disclose.” (Qasas, 28:69) (From *Fasl al-Hitab*)



The great scholar, possessor of experiential knowledge of the Divine, **Abu Yaqub Yusuf ibn Ayyub al-Hamadani**, may Allah sanctify his secret, declares:

“Everyone practices religion in accordance with their own level. They are treated accordingly by Allah, glorified be He. This can be elucidated as follows: All religiously obligatory acts (*fard*) have both a form and a spirit. One who fails to submit themselves duly to the injunctions of religion and cannot exert the required effort by way of adequately fulfilling their deeds, confounds the words of the great Sufis regarding individuals at various levels and ranks, and cannot be freed of contradiction. Many contradictory statements have been uttered in the explanation of these statements, which do not in effect contradict one another. We can understand this as an awareness of the level and rank of those making these statements.

As the seeker continues their journeying in great sincerity, spiritual roads become open for them and they start to comprehend the Qur'an. On account of this, they cannot find the time for preoccupation with the shortcomings of their own carnal soul, much less those of others. Thereafter, they are saved from the affliction of accusing and incriminating others. They then realise the places at which the sincere stumble and where they face Divine test or retribu-



tion. Subsequently, by virtue of the insight of the secrets contained in the inner heart, the mysteries of the unseen are revealed to them. They occupy themselves with these for a time and come to know themselves, i.e. their carnal selves.

The servant then reaches the beginning of becoming a servant to Allah, glory unto Him. After gaining a knowledge of Allah, they realise that those who best understand the Divine Book after the Prophets are the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. May Allah be well pleased with all of them. The purity of their secrets and their hearts being free from all corruption and vice has brought them to this station through the distinctive favours of Allah.

If, after the Prophets, the cautions, questions and counsels of these Four Rightly Guided Caliphs directed at understanding the Qur'an had not existed, all would have been stranded along the way. The staffs in the hands of the blind to find the way are always given by them. To the seeing, they diffused light and illuminated their path, a direct result of their being nearest to the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, in every way and their being privy to his secrets.

Each became, in their own unique way and with their particular perception, a diver in the ocean of oneness. Each attained to

a jewel commensurate with their personal spiritual aspiration. Everyone's portion is in proportion to the clarity and state of spiritual health of their eye of perception. The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, was the master of all the Prophets, being more 'knowing' than them all and his heart more exalted.

Allah, glorified be He, addressing him, declares:

"God has sent down on you the Book and the Wisdom, and taught you what you did not know. God's grace and favour upon you is tremendous indeed." (Nisa, 4:113)

Again, He states:

"The All-Merciful, He has taught the Qur'an." (Rahman, 55:1-2)



Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami states:

Allah Almighty addresses this group through signs and other human beings via direct words. Favouring them with sincerity in worship, He has rendered them people of sincerity; enabling them to grasp the truths of oneness, He has allowed them to reach great blessing, confirmed them through granting them strength of endurance in supplication as well as love of Him. Cleansing them with this love, He has received them in



His court of nearness and diffused to them His endless spiritual gifts. Moreover, He has made their hearts and tongues the conduit of rivers of wisdom upon and through which He has exhibited the meanings of His Divine word, has made them His friends, protected them externally from every kind of evil and has made them a source of light for the people on earth and leaders to the angels in the heavens.

They are incessantly preoccupied with Allah and find consolation only with Him. While not revealing to them the treasures of His mysteries if they do not devote themselves to Him, He opens His infinite treasures when they abandon all other than Him. He has selected them from among His servants, rendered them a source of light in many a nation, and has been their intimate companion, friend, the joy of their hearts and the light of their eyes. They have been seen among the people with their physical beings, but their hearts have not become estranged from Allah for even a moment; while they are in the world, their hearts are in realms beyond. And their spirits are before their Lord.

Again, **Shaykh Sulami** mentions in *Haqaiq al-Tafsir*:

“Ja’far ibn Muhammad the truthful,
may Allah be well-pleased with him, said

that the word of Allah is comprised of four kinds:

1. Expression 2. Sign 3. Subtlety 4. Truth.

Expression is for the masses, sign for the elect, subtlety for the saints and truth for the Prophets.

Some of those possessing experiential knowledge of Allah say:

“The fateful end of those who have no share in this knowledge is dreaded. That is, we fear their passing from this life without belief.”

The least benefit that experiential knowledge of Allah has for the human being is, even if they do reach direct vision, that they are saved from unbelief. In other words, even if experiential knowledge does not reach perfection, one earns the virtue of acknowledging their weakness and poverty and becomes connected to the circle of surrender.

This is where believers attain to unity. It is by this means that Muslims become secure from their enemies and are delivered from innovations in their religion.

Again, the spiritual masters say:

Knowledge hidden within mother-of-pearl and the mysteries concealed from the masses are owned by this group. They have



attained to this as a fruit of wisdom, by reason of their service. Only those who delve into the ocean of struggle can attain to this. Only those who are selected with spiritual vision, have abandoned everything other than Allah and have been honoured with Him have arrived at this bliss. Those who become haughty before Allah deny and turn away from these.

Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardi states:

The knowledge of the friends of Allah are grounded in the Divine inspiration gained in a state of ecstasy. This knowledge is particular to those people of intimate knowledge. Their refinements have been gathered around signs. These cannot be contained in sentences. These have been granted to them in order for their spirits to gain familiarity and intimacy with Allah. The truths that they have reached are from the ocean of Divine favour. Many who have become caught up in the intricacies associated with their knowledge, failing to grasp them, and have disbelieved as a result, have perished. Many have been filled with admiration before those elevated truths.

Junayd al-Baghdadi, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

Our knowledge is cited from written texts. And from these we make mention only of

their commentaries. That is to say, we speak of its boundaries. One must embark upon the path in order to acquire knowledge of the essence. The following poem is an elaboration of this meaning:

Such a community they are that they have fallen in love,

And are upon the path of straightforwardness.

So lofty is their spiritual ambition that They gaze upon no other than Allah.

They are in seas of modesty, knowledge, mildness and piety,

Of generosity, dignity, thankfulness and of praise

The realm of their being has become the home of these virtues.

They are treasures of purity, love and loyalty;

Thus, the Divine treasures of the Unseen

Are to them revealed one by one.

Incessantly these flow into the channel of their hearts.

Peace be to them with the blowing of the morning breeze.



He also states:

Possessing command of only the exoteric sciences and being deprived of the esoteric is yet another pit apart from ignorance. For such people, acquiring the knowledge that they desire is the sole aim. What has befallen them, with their troublesome suppositions and contradictory judgements, is self-conceit.

However, perhaps only a few people in several centuries have been able to attain success. And for them await fierce seas, roaring flames, seamed mountains, hearts filled with the dread and din of death and other indescribable calamities.

Every aspirant supposes himself or herself to be among those who have attained the Truth. A misguidance of this nature has enveloped the whole society. The exception, however, is the group of those who Allah Almighty has delivered, honouring them with His grace and favour and showing to them the straight and firm path.

May Allah, glory unto Him, satiate us with the crystal clear drink of love and protect us from the evil of those bandits awaiting us on our path, to drag us to the punishment of the Fire. Amin. Assuredly, He has full power over everything.



It is stated in Kashf al-Mahjub:

Ma'rifa is the basis of every good thing in this world and the next; knowledge of God is the most important condition in all spiritual moments and states. Most people, however, ignore this state of affairs, except those whom Allah has chosen and led forth from the darkness of this world, and whose hearts He himself has brought to life with His own presence, according to the word of the Most High:

"[He] set for him a light by which he moves (without any deviancy) among people, is he like the one who is as one lost in depths of darkness, from which he cannot get out?"

Ma'rifa is the power taking the heart to the Truth. A servant's turning away from all other than Allah (*masiwa*) is their worth. Those who do not know Allah experientially have no worth. The soundness of a person's knowledge is contingent upon their possessing intimate knowledge of Allah. The spiritual masters of this path were those people of perfected *ma'rifa*.

Ma'rifa is more superior to knowledge. One who does not know Allah intimately cannot be an '*arif*'; one who holds love of the world in their heart cannot be of the



people of unity (*tawhid*) and thus remains veiled.

Such a person cannot speak of the knowledge of *tawhid*, as one who has been overtaken by the affliction of love for the world has been veiled from the mysteries of unity. *Tawhid* does not show its face to their inner soul. The manifestation of the majesty of oneness on the servant renders them dead in their own attributes of servitude. Such a servant becomes the site where the Divine mysteries become manifest. They are living upon the Divine law and proofs of belief and Islam, attain to God's vision and 'pass away'. That is, they become annihilated in the Divine essence. The perfected level of this state is a characteristic of only the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings.

His carnal soul reached the seat of his heart, his heart reached the degree of his spirit, his spirit to the rank of his inner soul and his inner soul attained to his attribute of nearness. He divested himself of everything while within everything. He pulled away from the intellectual confines of people, always distanced himself from baseless misgivings and suspicions and was thus overwhelmed in the ocean of the realm of the evanescent. They reached amazement (*hayra*) in the extinction of attributes.



There are important principles that the travellers of the way, who read the states, morality and stories of these friends of Allah, need to practise.

The first is a lawful means of income and earning. Only those who undertake their servitude to Allah in uprightness have a share in the lawful morsel, because an Islamically lawful income is the sustenance of the saints. In the event of an aspirant's failure to observe this requirement, they become deprived of the spiritual pleasure experienced by these saints in question.

Due to their insight being closed, their observation is weak and inconstant.

Secondly, those who earn a lawful living must be careful in three matters:

Eating little,

Speaking little,

Sleeping little.

Those without questionable or suspect earnings, in particular, conform to these three principles without difficulty.

Through eating little, the heart becomes tender and the subtle faculties are spurred into action. If due effort is exhibited, and with the permission of the Almighty, one advances from the *Evil-Commanding Self (ammara)* to the *Self-Accusing Soul (law-*



wama), from there to the Inspired Self (mulhama) and eventually to the Self at Rest (mutma'inna), such that sainthood is ultimately reached.

That hindering the heart as well as the achievement of tranquillity is superfluous speech. Excessive, thoughtless speech breeds heedlessness. A person must accustom themselves to speaking little as well as mindfully.

More rest and sleep than is necessary is also harmful. These cause sluggishness and lethargy and shorten the time for worship.

“And He is with you, wherever you may be,” is the second *muraqaba* of those who have almost completed the journey.

During such contemplation, they consider themselves as being under the supervision of the Most High. That being the case, they both fulfil their inward and outward servant-hood duly, with every one of their actions displaying humility and gravity, and in so doing abandon their former superficial states.



Some of the important issues that ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Attar, may Allah sanctify his secret, touches upon in his spiritual conversations, especially for those aspirants aiming to advance on the Sufi path, read as follows:

"I will personally be the guarantor of one who enters this path through imitation reaching the Truth. My venerable teacher, Baha' al-Din al-Bukhari instructed me to imitate him. In every affair in which I imitated him and continue to do so, I see his mark and effect. The number of aspirants in our day adhering to this matter is few indeed. Those who act on their own cannot advance in their learning and they cannot reach the delicate subtleties of spirituality."

Training the carnal self means to transcend bodily attachments and turn to the realm of spirits and truths. The servant must forsake their own wishes and desires and abandon all attachments impeding their progress in the path to Truth.

The solution for this is as follows: "If they are able to forsake any of those attachments to this world at any moment they wish, this means that this attachment does not constitute an impediment to the disciple. They must realise that whichever one they keep in their heart and are unable to renounce it, then this attachment is an obstacle on their way and must strive to sever that connection. Our *ustadh*, Shah Naqshband was so heedful that whenever he wore a new garment, he would say, "This garment belongs to So-and-so," thus donning it as a item given in trust."



What falls upon the *murid* is to delegate all their affairs to the *murshid*. Referring their religious, worldly and every kind of affair to the latter's preference and discretion, under no circumstances do they retain their own preference or penchant in their presence.

FRIENDSHIP WITH ALLAH

On the station of friendship with Allah Almighty being above all other spiritual stations.

Hujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam) al-Ghazali, may Allah sanctify his secret, states:

“There is such a pleasure that, when compared with it, the pleasure of Paradise is nought. Heed and ponder upon these examples in order to understand it.”

The pleasures a person derives from different things in the various stages of their life are not equal. The entire pleasure of a child is in food. They know nothing beyond this. When they reach the age of seven, they start to distinguish between that which they eat and thus become selective. They derive more pleasure from one more so than the other. They begin to experience the pleasure of dressing and adornment after the age of ten. When they grow a little more and attain a high rank and position, their worldly pleasures come to an end. However, if they have eyes, they will see that none of these satisfy them inwardly, as all of these

will amount to nothing next to knowing the Most High.

Take heed of the words of the gnostics, be careful and try to understand their states. You will see that experiential knowledge and friendship with Allah is more precious than everything else.

The reason for the hiddenness of experiential knowledge of Allah is this: Knowing a thing is either risky or difficult. There are two reasons for this. A thing can be concealed and covered and not be illuminated. The latter can be illuminated to the utmost but the eye may not have the power to see it. For instance, bats cannot see during the day, but see instead at nights. This is not because objects are visible at night, but because bats possess eyes as sensitive as not being able to tolerate light.

Similarly, intimate knowledge of Allah is clear and luminous to the utmost. He is 'Az-Zahir', or the All-Outward. Hearts cannot afford finding Him. However many inconceivable and unimaginable beings there are in existence, all of them have been veiled with His power and majesty. He is outward at every moment, however the servant is incapable of observing Him through their own means.

This resembles the following: No light is brighter than the sun and there is no light

which does not receive light from it and become evident. Nonetheless, if the sun were not to set at a certain time, or if objects did not cast shadows, no one would have known that there was light on earth. And those knowing this would have attempted to explain it by means of thinking of its opposite and providing examples.

Likewise, if -Allah forbid the thought!- the absence or nonexistence of Allah was possible even for an instant, the earth and the heavens would have been decimated at that precise moment. As can be seen, all things have the attribute of bearing witness to His existence. In short, light has been concealed with His light.

Another issue is this. In childhood, this world is viewed haphazardly. All things and objects assume a given place. As the child does not possess an intellect that can hear the testimony of creation, they assume that there is nothing. Whoever possesses an eye that is not weak can see that everything is a masterpiece of Allah.

For instance, one who sees beautiful calligraphy considers the pen and the paper before the actual script itself. They reflect upon its calligrapher. This is the state of the people of reasoning. Beyond this is contemplation of the Creator of the calligrapher and His art, and to seek to find ways of knowing Him.



Thus, friendship with Allah is a spiritual station above all the others. The highest degree of the perfection of a servant is friendship with Allah becoming dominant in their heart and their severing attachment from all other than their Friend. If a person wonders what exactly this means, they should purge their hearts of everything other than Allah. They should remove attachment to the world from their hearts. Forsaking everything serving as an obstacle to becoming a friend of Allah, they should ardently desire knowledge of Him. They should be in the company of the friends of Allah. The seeds of *ma'rifa* wait ready in the soil of the body. Continuing remembrance and reflection is imperative in order for these to germinate.

In point of fact, no believer is devoid of the essence of love. The differences between them, however, stem from three reasons:

The first: A believer wastes themselves in way of worldly attachments and preoccupation. Elemental in friendship is love of only one. Preoccupation with a second thing does not fit with friendship; disarray results from the intervention of other things in friendship with Allah.

The second: Believers are different to one another with respect to their degree of *ma'rifa*. The more experiential knowledge, the greater is friendship with Allah.

The third: An intimacy needs to be established through *dhikr* and worship. This cannot be realised without importance being placed upon worship and the duty of servant-hood to Allah.

One's intimacy increases with whatever they make frequent mention of and that which they invoke suddenly appears before them. Similarly, one who does not know Him as a friend cannot know Him at all. Love is the fruit of experiential knowledge.



A perfected level of experiential knowledge is possible only via two paths.

The first is the way of the Sufi that is striving (*mujahada*). The inner world is purified through constant *dhikr*. The time eventually comes when this remembrance and invocation causes one given up to *dhikr* to forget all other than Allah. They then begin to see the realities of events and things with their inner world (*batin*) and the grandeur of the Most High becomes outward (*zahir*).

The second is learning the knowledge of *ma'rifa*. Such knowledge does not imply theology or other disciplines.

The beginning of experiential knowledge is reflection of the wonders of the Divine art. Through reflection (*tafakkur*), the servant



advances towards the Almighty's Beauty and Majesty and gain deeper awareness of the truths of His names and attributes.

The road to gaining this knowledge is a long one; however, a shorter route is possible. This is through the intimate knower's finding a perfected teacher and entering into their training. However, those who do not abandon impurities and who are not pure in intention cannot find a perfected master.

The Sufi way is not a snare, for prey to get caught therein. In the same way that one pursues such ways of earning income such as trade and commerce, they must also seek hard. And if one seeking experiential knowledge does not seek one of these two paths, they cannot find what they are looking for and will be left empty-handed.

One who claims that happiness in the Hereafter can be reached without the love of the Most High would have made a mistaken and ignorant claim indeed. The Hereafter is the realm of Divine beauty such that all beauties become manifest therein. Fortunate and felicitous are they who prepare themselves according to that realm.

All of this austerity, worship and experiential knowledge are for the purpose of procuring a connection between this realm and that one, while love for Him is this very

connection itself. In whatever circumstance a person is in in this world, such will be their circumstance in the Hereafter. However, they will see there the true facet of their worldly predicament. A Qur'anic verse states:

"He is indeed prosperous who has grown it in purity (away from self-aggrandizing rebellion against Allah)." (Shams, 91:9)

It is revealed in yet another verse:

"Whose is the absolute Sovereignty on that Day? It is Allah's, the One, the All-Overwhelming (with absolute sway over all that exist)." (Mumin, 40:16)

They do not understand *Allahu Akbar* to mean that – God forbid such a thought! – He is greater than all things other than Him.

There is nothing other than Him in the realm of existence to compare with Him. All other than Him do not possess an existence. The Existential and the Necessarily Existential One is only Him.

He is greater and exalted above and beyond being called Most-Great by use of any comparison or similitude.

His Greatness is completely beyond all abilities of comparison and conception, and such that it cannot be perceived by even Prophet or angel.



Only He Himself can know Himself completely. As none other can know Him, there is none greater than He.

After ascending to the firmaments of truth, the gnostics have unanimously seen no being in existence other than the Unique One, May His majesty be glorified.

Some have achieved this vision through knowledge and wisdom, while others have reached it via the path of spiritual state and tastes. By being fully freed of multiplicity, they have become immersed in complete oneness. Their minds reached their perfection in that matter, have been stupefied before the Divine unity and they have found nothing else to do other than remembrance and invocation. Forgetting themselves, they have inclined to none other than Allah Almighty.

At times intoxicated and having departed the supervision of their senses one has said, “I am truth (*Ana’ l-Haqq*)” while another, “I am holy, how great is my position (*Subhana ma a’zama shani*).” The words of lovers in a state of intoxication are overlooked, not relayed. After being freed of the state of intoxication and returning to one’s former state of mind, constituting the Divine balance on earth, they understand that these do not represent union in the true sense, but a semblance of it.

A person who looks in the mirror but does not see it perceives the image they see therein to be one with the image of the mirror itself. However, one who knows the mirror as well as themselves and possesses profundity in this matter does not fall into such an error. Those uttering such statements, after coming to their senses and attaining sobriety, have repented for their words. Those who see one over whom this state prevails refer to this state as being one of annihilation, and even the annihilation of annihilation (*fana al-fana*). This is because they have become annihilated in both themselves and in their annihilation as, when in this state, they cannot sense their lack of sense.

If they were to perceive their lack of sense, they would have sensed and perceived themselves and there would be no need for such utterances. The state of one immersed in such a state is referred to as union in the figurative sense and unity (*tawhid*) in the actual sense. There are many other mysteries beyond these truths such that there elaboration would be rather lengthy indeed.



Baha' al-Din Naqshband, may Allah sanctify his secret, has said: "If Hallaj al-Mansur had lived in our day, we would have prevented his saying 'I am the Truth'."



This particular state, of *Ana' l-Haqq*, manifested itself in one of the students of our esteemed *ustadh*, Mahmud **Sami Ramazanoğlu**. However, our respected *ustadh*, a master of the intimate knowers, did not take kindly to this in the least and said insistently, "No! He must say 'You are the Truth'." A short time later, the state of intoxication was removed from that person with the permission of the Most High, and he achieved repose and tranquillity.



According to *Hujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam)* al-Ghazali, may Allah sanctify his secret:

All the wonders in the universe are His works. Knowledge of the constitution of the human body and the functions and mutual adaptability of its limbs and organs is known as the science of anatomy. One who delves into this discipline sees the intricacies and subtleties of His art. If they enter upon an elaboration of the creation of Allah and understands it, they have attained the path of understanding the Divine attributes.

They observe the Most High's wisdom, power, grace, compassion and mercy to that degree and gain expertise in the discipline of medicine. Knowledge of the science of anatomy is the door to knowing the carnal self, or oneself. For this knowledge, in



comparison to the language of the spirit, is more concise or rather shorter. The body may be compared to a mount with the heart being its rider. The body was created for the heart.

There is a commonality between experiential knowledge of Allah and Vision of Allah. The same experiential knowledge will appear in another form elsewhere with this bearing no connection to the first. Whereas they are one and the same thing, resembling the seed of a tree.

Just as experiential knowledge of Allah is freed of the limitations of dimension in this realm, Vision of Allah is above and beyond such limitation in the other realm.

Vision of Allah is contingent upon intimate knowledge of Him. Whosoever has never acquired intimate knowledge of Allah will be screened from Vision. One with perfected intimate knowledge of the Divine is favoured with perfect Vision.

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, declares that, “Allah discloses Himself to people in general and to Abu Bakr in particular.”

This Vision will not be shared alike by all who know, but their discernment of it will vary in accordance with their intimate knowledge. Allah Almighty is One, while the appearance of human beings are quite



varied. Is it possible to show two forms resembling each other entirely? This is not possible, as every human being is single and unique. This reality also becomes apparent in front of a mirror. One is polished, while the other is not. One is straight, while the other is crooked. The day comes when even the crooked become straight. Every aspect of the beautiful is symmetrical and they are, therefore, always at ease. However, the unsightliness of one who is not beautiful causes them personal distress. Have no doubt that the Prophets have discovered the pleasure of Vision of Allah. Whereas what the scholars have found, the blind have found also. That which the God-revering, pious and loving scholars have found, other scholars have also.

As for the gnostics, Allah's friendship towards them is greater. The spiritual pleasure of the intimate knower who possesses a friendship that is greater is also more superior. Vision follows this. Its seed is another kind of intimate knowledge. However much a person loves, the pleasure they experience is of the same degree. Love of intimate knowledge and love of Vision are interdependent. If love does not accompany experiential knowledge, the latter is not sufficient for the attainment of complete happiness. As love prevails, no love of the world remains in the heart and this cannot

be achieved without renunciation and piety. The spiritual delight experienced by a Gnostic who is also an ascetic is more superior.

Beware! On no account, when reading or hearing from others, should you compare your *ma'rifa* with theirs and say, "My experiential knowledge must be of this degree." If you say so, you will deceive only yourself and will fail to achieve spiritual delight. If you have been bestowed with the truth of experiential knowledge, you will receive its pleasure only then. If they tell you that they will take your intimate knowledge in this world and give you Paradise, choose intimate knowledge of Allah. Gaining an awareness that intimate knowledge is more valuable than Paradise resembles understanding the pleasure of hunger to be greater than that of a delectable, aromatic dish, such that there is no relationship between these two pleasures.

Compare the pleasure of Vision and experiential knowledge to this.



ADOPTING THE GOOD MANNERS OF A FRIEND OF ALLAH

Every behaviour and state of our venerable master was like a miracle. When a servant is honoured with the favour of fulfilling their duty of servant-hood within the sphere of the elevated Sunna, their every action and manner must be deemed a saintly miracle.

The Most High expands the insight of those who follow the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, earnestly and fervently. One favoured with this honour begins to perceive good and evil, benefit and harm, and even those things occurring to the heart of those in front of them. In short, their every action is felicitous, they are not given to baseless misgivings, anticipate future events by means of their insight and take necessary precaution. All this, however, is possible only with Divine providence.

One of the spiritual students of our respected teacher explains:



About thirty years ago, when going to visit our venerable master, a beautiful woman involuntarily drew my gaze. Absentmindedly, I looked more closely. I understood my mistake and was very sorry, but what was done was done. In great shame, I entered his presence and as per his refinement, he accepted me into his presence as always. He did not make even the slightest implication. I used to write some of the books and our master would fill in the Arabic sections. I left one of these books there. He told me that I could pick it up a few days later.

When I went to visit again some time later, he had filled in the Arabic sections of the book and handed those back to me. On the last page of the book, he had left a note on a separate piece of paper. On it was written:

"When going to visit 'Uthman, may Allah be well-pleased with them, the gaze of one of the noble Companions was drawn to a woman and he could not keep himself from looking in her direction repeatedly. When he finally came to 'Uthman's presence, the Commander of the Faithful, addressing him said:

'I sense the presence of adultery in your eyes.'

The Companion replied: 'O Commander of the Faithful, how did you know?'

The latter then recited the Prophetic

Tradition, ‘Beware of the discernment of a believer.’”



‘Abd al-Khalīq Gujdūwānī, one of the great spiritual guides of the Naqshī chain, established “**Eleven Principles**” as the foundation of the Sufi way.

One of these is ‘**Nazar ba kadam**’, literally watching one’s steps. The etiquette of this is as follows:

Focussing one’s gaze to one’s feet. One who looks here and there while walking is distracted and quick-passing thoughts (*khwatir*) invade their heart. A person who restricts their gaze to their feet is saved from both looking at the forbidden and being subjected to *khawatir*. This is due to the veil coming to heart, being through meaningless preoccupation with one’s surroundings.

The eye is the secret agent of the heart. That seen by the heart preoccupies the heart and is hereby driven to heedlessness.

In brief, everything looked at, whether good or bad, invades the heart and deprives it of remembrance and invocation of Allah.

As the spiritual masters pay attention to this issue and have accustomed themselves to looking at their feet, they are protected from every kind of sin and wrongdoing.



The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, the esteemed Companions and the elevated saints have not glanced around them, but perpetually in front of them, in humility.



Upon our return from the Pilgrimage, our venerable master informed me of his desire to visit Baghdad and visit the tombs of the saints. We arrived at the airport in order to fly directly to Baghdad from Madina. Despite there being room on the aircraft, the English pilot obstinately refused to allow us on board. Saddened by this, we returned to the house where we stayed as guests and spent the night there.

After performing the morning prayer at the Prophet's Mosque, we received news that after departing from Madina, the plane got caught in a storm near Baghdad and that after remaining in the air for a few hours, was forced to land back at the same airport.

Praise be to Allah, the flight route had cleared and we flew to Baghdad on that same flight. We went to a hotel near the Tigris. We were five people together with our companions. After resting that day, we went the following day, accompanied by a friend residing there, to visit the tombs of **'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, Imam Musa Kazim, Imam A'zam Abu Hanifa, Imam Abu Yu-**

suf, Imam Suhrawardi, Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, Habib A'jami, Ma'ruf al-Karhi, Shibli, Junayd al-Baghdadi, and Sari al-Saqati as well as the place where **Hallaj al-Mansur's** ashes were scattered. Subsequently going to Madaen, we visited the tomb of **Salman al-Farisi**, may Allah be well-pleased with him.

The next day, we paid a visit to '**Abd al-Qadir Efendi**', an individual respected, learned and one of the righteous people of virtue and spirituality.

This saintly figure educated students in the madrasa adjacent to the tomb of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani while at the same time serving as Imam of the mosque where Imam A'zam Abu Hanifa lay buried. At first encounter, he said the following to our venerable master:

"I entreated Allah Almighty for two things. One of these was to behold your luminous countenance and be honoured with your company. Praise be to Allah, He allowed me to realise one of my wishes." He thus described his happiness and invited us on the day we were to return to Istanbul. He received us with great respect, honour and hospitality and spiritual conversations also continued.



In Baghdad, we met a Turkish man by the name of **Nur al-Din Efendi, who dedicated himself to struggle for Islam**. He



asked a great many questions concerning the situation of Turkey. He was one of those who shared both the sorrow and the joy of Islam. At the same time, he also published a monthly periodical through his own means. He was a lawyer by profession.

He insisted on having us over for dinner and we could not turn down his invitation. The table had been prepared quite tastefully. All the food had been placed upon the table and there was a generous amount of bread. During the meal, our *ustadh* turned to me and said:

“Place bread in front of the guests.”

Despite there being a plentiful amount of bread in front of everyone, I added to this supply. I failed to understand the delicacy of the matter.

The meal was being consumed in silence. This is of the manners of the *tariqa*.

If it is said: “The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, used to speak during a meal,” this would be correct. As the Pride of Humanity was a source of Divine effusion, the slightest heedlessness could not be in question for those present in his assembly. Even **Imam Ghazali** declares in his works that one should adorn the dining table with conversation, and he is right in doing so.

Some people of knowledge in our day, on these grounds, speak during a meal, even on many a trivial matter. This engenders disarray in hearts, rather than being of benefit. The Qur'anic verses and hadith recalling the Most High are not spoken over the table and, as such, the meal is consumed in heedlessness.

Quite some time later, a few years after to be precise, I came to understand the motion and caution our *ustadh* directed to me regarding placing more bread in front of the guests. Great spiritual masters, when necessary, say things that need to be said, as miracles particular to saints, and do not allow opportunity for their addressees to realise these as miracles.

In all honesty, at that table, my mind was preoccupied with many trivialities. That is to say, I was consuming every morsel in heedlessness.



Muhammad Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband, and other perfected masters authorised to conduct spiritual training, have shown meticulous attention to food being consumed with a great care and devoted reverence.

In point of fact, when we consume the bounties bestowed upon us by Allah Almighty in great wakefulness and propriety, we are able to subsequently perform our



ritual prayers, supplication and other duties of servant-hood as they deserve – in spiritual depth, humility, devotion and deference.

In contrast, if the food that we eat is not lawful and, on top of that, is eaten in great mindlessness, it has an immediate effect. At that time, that is, an immense laziness and sluggishness ensues and notwithstanding how much we are aggrieved or strive, we are unsuccessful.

We must also choose very carefully those who cook and prepare the food. When necessary, the unmindful that do not perform their prayers should be employed in other duties and service.

It can be seen that some Muslims eat and shop in places where there is alcohol. Such indifferent behaviour deadens the heart and injures our spiritual insight (*basira*). Many people cannot attain piety, despite their regular night worship, due to this.



According to Hasan al-Basri, the people of piety are distinguished via various marks:

Truthfulness;

Exact compliance with an agreement;

Visiting relatives;

Helping the weak and taking pity on them;

Not boasting and walking in self-conceit;
Striving to spread goodness everywhere;
Possessing those good habits that engender a feeling of nearness to Allah Almighty.

The people of piety fear Allah, glorified be He,

Love Him most devotedly,

Implement the Divine commands and shun the Divine prohibitions to the letter, on themselves without making excuses.

In consequence of its importance, Baha' al-Din Naqshband used to prepare the food of the poor dervishes with his own hands. He would personally set the table for them. When they came and sat at the table, he would counsel them to protect their sense of being in the Divine presence. Were one of those taking their place at the table to take a single morsel in heedlessness, he would caution them through spiritual unveiling and would not like them to be won over by heedlessness.

And for this reason, he would say:

"The realisation of beneficial works is only possible via lawful provisions. This is connected to consuming their provisions in the consciousness of being in the Divine presence. In particular, attaining such a consciousness in prayer is contingent upon



one's eating the lawful food in that same consciousness.

Shah Naqshband would not eat of food, even of little amount, that was prepared in anger or half-heartedly. He would prevent even one of the people with him from eating that food.



He went, one day, to a place where one of his disciples brought him some food. He looked at it and said:

“The person making this food was angry throughout their preparing it, from kneading its dough, to cooking it and bringing it to this state. Eating of such food does not become us. There is no goodness in food made in such states as these. There is no blessing. Satan has found a way into that food; how can good come of it?”

Doctors in the present-day repeat the same guidance, even if partially. They advise the following:

“In order to prevent diseases of the heart, stomach and the nervous system one should eat little. Do not sit to eat while you are angry. Do not rush while eating, consuming morsels that are large, and chew your food well.”



Sayyid Kasim Tabrizi asked ‘Ubayd Allah Ahrar:

What is your name?”

“Ubayd Allah.”

“Strive and allow the meaning of your name to be realised,” he said and added:

“Do you know why the states and truths of intimate knowledge do not surface in our day? Because their surfacing is dependent upon inner purity. Inner purity, however, is realised through lawful sustenance.”

When no lawful sustenance and provisions remained, experiential knowledge and truths became impossible to see.

How can perceptions of intimate knowledge and truths and realities come from hearts that are heedless, dark and distracted with futilities?

Travels of the Ustadh to Bursa

The venerable *ustadh* was very fond of Bursa and used to say, “Bursa is the land of righteous men and women.” Every year, he would make about two to three trips to this blessed place and would each time stay there three to five days, sometimes longer.

Prior to his travels he would, without fail,



consult with those few people who were to accompany him as to the journey and what needed to be done.

Consultation is a part of Islamic etiquette and propriety. Consultation, which is held in earnestness and with sincerity, yields very positive results. However, decisions that are reached through consultation must be implemented exactly, as the approval and good pleasure of Allah Almighty is in sincerity and earnestness.

In our day, consultation is not appealed to and, if held, the decisions reached are swept under the carpet. Such an artificial, superficial agreement holds no value, whereas the approval of the Most High is present in every task that is performed with good intention.

In family life, men and women must consult with each other regarding every important matter.

In business, partners must meet constantly and exchange ideas with one another.

Likewise, the same route must be taken in travelling and social relationships, especially those along religious lines.

Observing due propriety attracts the approval of the Most High. The result obtained from that with which Allah Almighty is pleased is undoubtedly felicitous.

The result of those things carried out in haste and without consultation is generally regret. Especially in cases of marriage and business partnership, one must seek information concerning the individuals in question from those who are qualified and righteous and then make their decision accordingly.

Consultation dispels geocentricism, pretentiousness and the rebelliousness of the carnal soul.

One who consults is freed of responsibility and is at peace.

The middle state, or truth, manifests itself in consultation.

This is because when one consults with a group of three to five people, there are also present those with opposing views and temperaments. There are all kinds of people, from those acting with diligence, to the audacious, brave, tolerant, knowledgeable, ignorant, stern and the insightful, through which the soundest path can be nominated.



When they reached Bursa, the friends there would greet them, pray if it was time for the prescribed prayer and subsequently eat something.

Our esteemed *ustadh* would retire to his room in his house along the Uludağ highway



and, after a short rest of ten to fifteen minutes, would move to the room opposite in which he would greet and welcome his guests.

That tiny room would later be filled with visitors coming gradually and would hold as big a crowd as would a large living room. Those living in Bursa and surrounding areas would benefit greatly from these spiritual exchanges through spiritual conversation and from his guidance.

After the crowd had withdrawn, towards evening and on the small balcony overlooking the meadows, he would explain to his fellow companions the hidden and overt signs pertaining to the wisdoms in the creation of the earth, heavens, the sun and other heavenly bodies. We would understand some of these, but would be unable to unravel the others.

In his travels to Bursa, he would be sure to visit the tombs of three perfected spiritual masters.

These were: **Emir Bukhari, Muhyi'd-Din Uftada** and **Ismail Haqqi** of Bursa.

As he knows declining invitations without good reason to be a shortcoming, he would accept these notwithstanding how tired he himself was. When a great number of those requested to attend spiritual exchanges with him, he would opt to hold a joint one beneath the centuries-old chestnut tree, locat-

ed upon the hillsides of Conkaya village, at the foot of Uludağ Mountain.

There, he would discuss at length the nobility of the human being, the need for every believer endowed with intellect to grasp this matter and act accordingly, as well as many other issues; the prayers would be performed at their particular times and in congregation. Then, all present would return to their homes in the spiritual delight and serenity that that assembly offered.

Despite this exertion and exhaustion, our respected *ustadh* would call his home in Erenköy and earn the pleasure of his late mother and family members. During the telephone conversation, we would flee to the remotest corners of the house and refrain from showing the courtesy of listening on. The number of those observing this has decreased in our day.

There are many responsibilities that marriage places on the shoulders of humankind. A man must duly fulfil what falls upon him, as must a woman. Those who are neglectful in this regard become of the wrongdoers. There are explanations pertaining to these duties in books on Islamic practice, various works and publications.

We seek refuge in Allah Almighty from being among the wrongdoers and from being wronged.



One day before his return, our *ustadh* would never omit buying presents to take back home.

The Noble Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, declares:

"The most important worship after fulfilling the religiously obligatory is to engender happiness in a believer's heart."

One of the foremost means of causing happiness in a believer's heart is to exchange presents. Exchanging gifts increases the love and earnestness between Muslims. There are a great number of Prophetic Traditions on the matter of giving mutual gifts.

The act of giving gifts must be performed for the sake of Allah Almighty, with all one's heart. Our forefathers placed great importance on this. Today, in the Hijaz, everyone takes presents to each other. One who receives a gift definitely reciprocates with the giving of another gift. It is not necessary for a gift to be costly, so long as everyone acts in accordance with one's own taste and budget and are not crushed under the weight of great expense and difficulty.

On the eve of his return to Istanbul, our venerable *ustadh* would purchase the necessary, useful gifts and souvenirs in a very short time and would swiftly return to his residence. He did not take kindly to spend-

ing more time than was absolutely necessary at places of shopping.

The gifts he purchased were those things that were most necessary. A visit would be paid to the late Vehbi Efendi, one of the righteous. Knives manufactured in Bursa would then be purchased and then, from the shop of the late Basri Efendi, such inexpensive but essential items as scarves and prayer mats and would be obtained. A great amount of chestnuts would also be bought, all to be given as gifts, back in Istanbul.

On the eve of his Pilgrimage, he would quickly stop by the shops at the Hijaz and buy such things as prayer beads, henna, prayer caps, kohl and water bowls. He would especially select the prayer beads himself and would buy the most practical and tasteful of them.

As with all his other travels, he would ensure that his return trip from Bursa was either on Mondays or Thursdays.

Those beautiful days cannot be described with a pen...



At the Cyprus War

Another one of his hundreds of other miracles...



The esteemed *Ustadh* had prepared three important themes before the Cyprus War of 1974:

- The Battle of Badr;
- The Russian War;
- The Battle of Gallipoli; and
- The assistance of the Angels.

In these writings, he discussed the way in which these battles ended in victory by means of the bravery and heroism of the Turkish and Muslim soldiers. This warning was intimation of the fact that we were at the beginning of a severe war and that we needed to be ready and wakeful as a nation.

He read or had someone read stories from these three subjects, insistently for about six months, before each of our spiritual gatherings. When I personally read two of these on one occasion, he would insist upon my reading the third.

Troops had landed at Cyprus and with their driving the enemy to defeat, through the permission of Allah Almighty, the grand awaited victory was achieved in a very short time. From that day on, he saw no need to repeat these matters.



One of our friends, an army officer, explained: Seventy-five aircraft conducted four



flights each. That is to say, three hundred flights were conducted over Cyprus and not even one person was harmed.

What is this, if not the help of the Almighty? Under normal circumstances, much damage is sustained in airborne battles. One of his friends, who was of weak faith even recounted:

“I launched assaults upon quite a number of places. At the point I was to return to Turkey for refuelling, a white-bearded person with a glowing countenance appeared in the plane out of nowhere. I was stupefied. He gave me instructions to bomb this place or that place.

When I told him that we were compelled to return, he said, ‘No, don’t turn back. The plane has already been refuelled.’ He gave instructions to drop bombs on a considerable number of places. In utter astonishment, I did as he said without any hesitation. Some time later, he said, **‘I am Uways al-Qarani’** and then disappeared.

When I returned to the detachment and explained the situation, however much they wanted to punish me, when they saw the pictures taken from the plane, they too were amazed and even that army officer whose belief was weak came to understand firsthand that the Almighty has full power over everything.”



If Allah Almighty wills a path of deliverance for a servant, he makes another one of His servants a means to this.



An incident that took place in Üsküdar:

One of those participating in the Cyprus War came to Üsküdar around three or five years ago. **He sought someone by the name of Mahmud Hüdayi.** He travelled a fair deal in search of him. It was reported to him:

“He whom you seek is a friend of Allah who lived three-and-a-half centuries ago. He is no longer alive. Come, if you like we can visit his tomb.”

He, however, said: “How could it be? He was alive during the Cyprus War some ten years ago.” And then he explained:

“During the fiercest moment of the war, I had accidentally parachuted into enemy land. They were either going to take me as a prisoner-of-war or kill me. Precisely at that moment, a hand grabbed hold of me and took me to the side of the Turks. But how had he done this? I do not know either. Then the owner of that hand said:

“I am Mahmud Hüdayi, from Üsküdar,” and then disappeared.

Supposing him to still be alive, I wanted to visit this person to whom I was indebted.



Despite the passing of so many years, I was only able to come today, but only to visit his tomb and not him.»



Another incident:

A soldier relates:

“Such a state of affairs transpired during the Cyprus War that eight or ten enemy soldiers swooped down on me. I resisted them. At one point, their situation changed. They started showing signs of fear before me and let me go. Taking advantage of their laxity, I pointed my gun at them and, bringing them to army base, handed them over to our commander. The commander was shocked at this affair. He asked them:

“What is this cowardice? While you are eight or ten in number, how is it that you surrendered to this one Turk?”

Their response was as follows:

“He was not one. There were many heroic, stalwart Turkish soldiers dressed in green behind him. We can't see them now.”



With Faces Smiling and Hearts in Sorrow

Every year customarily, a trip would be made to the mineral springs at Tuzla, the



afternoon prayer would be performed there, beneath a tree in the garden there, after which we would return to Istanbul.

In relation to the particularity of Tuzla's mineral springs is a detailed signboard hung above the taps there, in the words of **Awliya' Chalabi** and taken from his work.

The object of the respected *Ustadh*'s taking those closest to him there was due to that water being beneficial for a great many illnesses becoming settled in the human body. By means of this water, the harmful worms that have collected in any part of the body, pins, nails, keys, teeth or the like that have accidentally been swallowed are powerfully forced out of the body, engendering great sense of relief.

Even if drinking the water presents little difficulty, fifteen to twenty glasses can be consumed with effort and, on account of its many wisdoms, heaviness and bloating is not experienced.

There is no observable effect in the event of less water being imbibed. As the water is drunk, one needs to be in movement, walking about in the garden.

Again, on a summer's day, we had gone there with about ten or so of our friends. We arrived there at approximately ten o'clock.

Within one to two hours we both drank the water and went for walks. Towards

noon, we took ablution for the noon prayer and, with the recitation of the Call to Prayer, performed the prayer in congregation. The table was then set and we sat to eat the food that we had brought with us. There were those walking nearby who also joined the meal.

Following the meal, as always, our respected *Ustadh* would open his book and read from those matters pertaining to Islam and Sufism that concerned the day. Whereas on this particular occasion, he requested, with his smiling countenance, that we return home. There was not the slightest cheerlessness on his face and he retained his smile, as always.

We could not make sense of this and drew the conclusion that there was perhaps one among us who was undeserving of such spiritual exchange.

Again we dropped out *Ustadh* off to his residence in quite good spirits.

His wife related the following: "As always, he came home in joyful spirits not having even the slightest complaint. He went to the rest room frequently and this later became even more frequent. Again, there was no change in his countenance or speech whatsoever. When I insisted that he was in distress and that we ought to go to the doctor, he accepted. It turned out that a stone had blocked



the bladder due to excessive pressure. Now imagine the pain that this caused and consider the position of this great friend of Allah in the eyes of His Lord.

On Return from Pilgrimage

In either the year 1972 or 1973 on a return from the Pilgrimage, we numbered around six or seven people, even though our *Ustadh* was present.

There were flights to Damascus only from Madina and they were only once a week.

After waiting at the airport from a few hours, we set off for Damascus. When we disembarked the craft, we saw that none of our twenty-five pieces of luggage had been taken on board. In those days, when there were a great number of passengers, some items of luggage were kept for the next flight.

We were thus forced to go to the Yarmuk hotel in the city empty handed. However, such necessities as prayer mats and towels were in our luggage.

Our respected *ustadh* said, "With Allah's permission, we will return to Istanbul on Wednesday's flight."

Days were going by, but we still had not received our luggage. Despite there being

only two days left until Wednesday, we had not received any news.

Our *ustad* was resolved upon returning on Wednesday, while we, on the other hand, became increasingly nervous. During these days, he continued accepting invitations and paying visits to tombs. On the very day of our departure, we decided upon going to the town centre, albeit despondently, with one of our travel companions, just in case we happened to get some news. We took two taxis.

On our way, we saw our luggage on the side of the road, placed rather carefully in a desolate place and, loading them in the two taxis, returned to the hotel.

Who had brought these here and who had placed them so perfectly? Luggage should normally have been in the central management building at the airport. Notwithstanding this, an absentmindedness came upon us, through the effect of a spiritual disposal and with Divine permission we had not then understood this to be a saintly miracle.

Examples of Propriety from Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu

Our venerable master **Es'ad Erbili**, may Allah sanctify his secret, used to jest with those friends of his open to humour.



Whereas our *ustadh*, **Sami Ramazanoğlu**, may Allah sanctify his secret, never spoke in jest. Allah, be He exalted and glorified, has sent spiritual guides and masters in accordance with the people of the age. The time comes when spiritual pleasures decrease and, due to the doubtful things that are consumed, black and white become impossible to distinguish.

When one utters something as a joke, this is taken seriously and one is either pleased or saddened.

You say something to someone in confidence, intended as warning or as glad tidings, but they cannot understand this and divulge it to whosoever comes their way.

Again, you say something to someone that they must announce in all the necessary places, but they instead hide and conceal this and as such breach the trust given to them.

How can one speak in jest in such an age? I personally wanted to speak jokingly to a few of those close to me, but they did not understand me, instead taking me seriously.

My respected teacher **Mahmud Yazır** Efendi used to often utter the expression, “Subtle jokes need a subtle personality”.

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be

peace and blessings, occasionally joked with his Companions.

Hence, jokes that are offensive and inappropriate must be abandoned. However, polite discussions depending on the situation would give joy and relief to the spiritual assemblies.

Which foods our venerable *ustadh* liked or did not like were never in question. Whatever was placed before him, whether dry bread or foods prepared with the greatest care and attention, were one and the same for him. He used to eat every food bestowed to him by Allah in great thankfulness and tranquillity. Beginning in the name of Allah, with the *basmala*, he would take very small morsels and chew them well.

When once in Damascus, one of the poor invited us to dine with them. That poor man could not, however, manage to place a meal before us. When leaving, our *ustadh* repeatedly thanked that man. His way was that of forever forgiving and always indulging others.

When going altogether on visits for the occasion of 'Eid, we would all hesitate in finding our way around as a year would have passed. Whereas our venerable *ustadh* used to guide us in this also, directing us as to where to go and in which direction to turn.

Some people suppose that because the



friends of Allah have given their hearts to their Lord, they are unable to understand worldly matters. However, as they are nourished with the light of the Most High, the world is laid bare before them. Such shortcomings as forgetfulness or absentmindedness are not observable in them.

Allah, glorified be He, is the All-Living, Self-Subsistent One. He has adorned those servants drawn near to Him with these beautiful attributes. Hence, there is no such thing as idleness or abstractedness in our guides, the noble Companions and the perfected masters.

Although they were not trained in the military academies and schools of civil service or economics that we have today, by virtue of their devotion and attachment to Allah, glory unto Him, they have carried out every duty they took upon themselves, with great ease and without any observable error, whether it be as a just head of state, commander of the army or any other.

This is an important matter, for aspirants, which needs to be duly emphasised. The people of spiritual journeying on the path of truth experience growth and development in intellect, conception and manner, parallel to the sincerity and capacity that the Most High has favoured them with.

themselves to serve in the Sufi path cannot grasp this issue of paramount importance.

However, those who are in the service of truth are required to know the delicacies and propriety of Islam. That is, they must be well versed in the morality, manner and Sunna of the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, and must practice this in their own person. One of our spiritual masters has said:

“In our path, propriety comes before service.”

For instance, the Messenger of Allah, upon him peace and blessings, used to repeat those matters of importance thrice.

Whereas in our day, despite being forced to repeat each thing three or five times, whether of import or not, these are not heeded by anyone. The reason for this is our being deprived of Islamic manners and refinement.

For instance, they present to you a friend with whom you meet each day, saying, “This is So-and-so”; this stems from their ignorance of the person to whom they are spiritually connected. How can such people asleep advance on the path?



Ahmad ibn Hadrawayh, may Allah sanctify his secret, is known to have said: “Let



one who wants Allah to be with them at every moment choose the path of truthfulness, as the Most High is with the truthful.”

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, affirms: “*Truth leads to goodness.*”

The aspirant or seeker must pull away from wealth and position, the influential effect of creation and turn their gaze away from these, absolutely, so that they can properly learn the essence of these.

The most beneficial thing for a seeker is to know their carnal self, increase their sincerity and faithfulness and preserve due propriety in the consciousness of forever being in the Divine presence. Irrespective of how much time they spend in the presence of their spiritual master, eating, drinking and travelling with him, this is not sufficient.

There are many who are seemingly distant, but because their inner worlds have matured, are near in the realm of reality. One needs to be understanding and grasp these issues.

Zayd ibn Aslam revealed that,

“A person who holds onto truthfulness taken hold of a firm handle.”

For Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, may Allah sanctify his secret:

“Truth is the sword of Allah. Whatever on earth it is put to, it slashes.”

Love of position is among the worst of constitutions. Those who are thus cannot sense the fragrance of truth and sincerity. As they seem themselves to be perfected, they take the liberty to cause disorder and dissension.



My dear nephew relates:

“Once, when my turn came to serve our *ustadh*, our esteemed master had returned home with his family. When we arrived at his residence on the Uludağ highway, he got out of the car. He took the members of his household inside one by one, his wife included, and then shutting the door, came back next to me and thanked me over and over again.

However much Islamic propriety and refinement he possessed, all of it was practised in his home.

Despite my being in the position of her son, his respected wife would speak to me through an intermediary, such as Ömer Bey or Mahmud Bey.¹

Dear readers!

There are many warnings and lessons to

1. Translator's Note: The former her son-in-law and the latter her grandson.



be gleaned from this for the people of intimate knowledge and wisdom. If one who is at head of the household is attentive to even the smallest matters, tranquillity and happiness will not be wanting in that family, by virtue of their being on the path of Allah Almighty. Roses, hyacinths, violets and flowers of every kind will sprout therein, each with their fragrances and aromas. A Paradise like life will be attained while still in the world.

Notwithstanding how much they may benefit Islam or humanity, a believer is considered flawed if they neglect familial order and harmony.

Every individual is responsible first for themselves, then for their family, the upbringing of their children and then for their other relations.

We must realise our duty of servant-hood duly, in a consciousness grounded in sincerity. One who knows Allah, glory unto Him, as He deserves to be known does not preoccupy their mind and heart with empty, futile things. They become, therefore, a qualified servant. Due to the fact that the gaze of some heads of family is directed towards people, they constant seek praise from them.

They entertain the view, for instance, that, "Our neighbour is very polite and obliging. They are respectful towards us. When

they come over as a family, we will have offended them if we sit separately. There is no harm in us sitting altogether."

Through such foolishness, they prefer the approval of servants to the approval of Allah Almighty. While those on the path of such tainted servant-hood may be modest in dress, perform their prayers and other worship, they cannot receive the fruits of these.

This is because they are incomplete. If you were to gather one hundred such people, they could not make one person, as they are in a state of instability. What they call white today, they can call black tomorrow, as a true belief has not become established in their hearts.

What they need to do is to realise their mistake and express remorse for their misdeeds, seek forgiveness, follow the righteous and truthful and benefit from their counsel.

Muhammad Baha' al-Din Naqshband, may Allah sanctify his secret, used to say: "*Our way is the way of suhba.*"

Suhba strengthens the familiarity, sincerity, love and affection between believers and aspirants.

Such spiritual exchange with the friends of Allah is of utmost benefit. Even looking at the countenance of the righteous gives a person a sense of serenity and one's troubles and woes are eliminated.



One who spends time in the company of the dejected becomes downcast, while one who remains in the company of the high-spirited becomes jubilant also.

The human being (*insan*) takes this name “due to their capacity to achieve an intimacy with all things, good and bad”. Familiarity and affection increases intimacy. Being near to those who have acquired knowledge, mildness, purification, who are faithful and who possess beautiful character is a treasure. Establishing an intimacy with them is a means to attaining intimacy with Allah.

Superfluous words are not spoken in those spiritual conversations that are held in view of earning the approval and pleasure of Allah Almighty, as these are spiritual banquets whereupon Divine blessings descend. Only if both admission and exit from this table is realised in due propriety, can benefit be gained. Worldly speech is not allowed for. Verses from the Qur'an, Prophetic Traditions as well as the stories, states and counsel of the Companions and friends of Allah are read. If one who is competent in Qur'anic recitation is present, the *suhba* begins with their recitation of a certain portion of the Qur'an.

If they listen attentively and protect themselves from every kind of evil, they become one of those who practise what they believe.

They become learned without writing or reading, without pen or ink. This is because these remain in the book, while the other remains in the mind and memory. One who listens after exhibiting all these behaviours becomes learned; however, they themselves do not know themselves to be learned and as such entertain no pretence.

Suhba must start and finish on time. It is not proper to extend them more than is necessary.

As if one is in a foreign country and cannot speak the language, they should leave the gathering quietly only saying “Peace be upon you” at the end of the *suhba*. There are many who do not pay attention to this matter and lose immediately the spiritual effusion and tranquillity they have acquired. That is to say, they return empty handed.

In addition to performing their night worship, aspirants must not neglect their *suhba*.

It is said that the *suhba* serves as a complement to *dhikr* and daily reading and recitation. In other words, it completes all the other forms of worship. Worldly impurity and love is removed from the heart in *suhba* and are replaced with love of Allah and His Messenger.

No matter how tired and out of spirits those people in attendance are when they



first arrive, they leave the gathering with no sign of exhaustion or cheerlessness. This is due to the removal of worldly grief and weariness from their hearts and the love of Allah and His Messenger becoming established therein. They are thus vigorous and at peace.

Two questions that our esteemed *ustadh Mahmud Sami*, may Allah sanctify his secret, posed to every one of his students coming from Anatolia were:

“How are *suhba* conducted?” and “Is the necessary etiquette observed?”

The taste and pleasure derived from *suhba* wherein spiritual exchanges are held and in the required propriety, cannot be described. This is because those who are present delve into serenity. Especially if the person speaking is one spiritually authorised to do so. By means of their spiritual disposal, a reciprocal affection, earnestness and every kind of manifestation emerges between them and their listeners. If one who attains this pleasure neglects their work, family or children, they fall into error and become of the wrongdoers.

May our Lord, the Most High, enable all us to be of His servants with sensitivity of perception and discernment. Amin.

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